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AACRAO
Welcome to the Summer 2017 edition of C&U! Back when I was working full-time, summer always seemed to be a good time to write. There are always people away on vacation, so the number of meetings was always reduced. Even with summer registration and New Student Orientation, the pace was slower than in the spring and the fall, leaving some time for reflection. Why not spend some time this summer working on an article or book review for C&U?

This edition includes two feature articles. In “Institutional Ethnography Reveals Complexities of Supporting Transgender Students’ Use of Self-Identified First Names and Pronouns in Higher Education,” Dot Brauer addresses higher education identity management and communication practices that frustrate efforts to support transgender students’ use of self-identified first names and pronouns on campus.

In “Unseen Differences: Cultural Diversity among Hispanic and Latino Students,” Claudia Rodriguez, Jesse Parrish and Rodney Parks present the results of a study based on interviews with self-identified Hispanic or Latino students at a medium-sized private university.


Also included are four commentaries: “Two Thousand Shy People in One Place,” by Ann Liska; “Maintaining the Access Mission: Open Access Universities and the Challenges of Performance Based Funding,” by Katy Mathuews and Brad Pulcini; “Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Mapping Curricula to Remove Barriers to Student Success,” by Rodney Parks, Jesse Parrish and Blake Whitesell; and “Butts, Hearts, or Dreams: What Do You See in Your Classrooms?” by Christopher Tremblay.

We have two Research-in-Brief articles. Wendy Kilgore and Ellen Wagner present “Dual Enrollment from Two Points of View: Higher Education and K–12.” Jennifer McClure presents the results of her AACRAO SEM-EP research project, “Impact of Advisor Outreach on Priority Registration.”

The edition also contains three book reviews by Matthew Fifolt, of College Sexual Assault: College Women Respond, by Lauren J. Germain; Postsecondary Play: The Role of Games and Social Media in Higher Education, edited by William G. Tierney, Zoe B Corwin, Tracy Fullerton and Gisele Ragusa; and Diploma Mills: How For-Profit Colleges Stiffed Students, Taxpayers, and the American Dream, by A. J. Argulo. This issue also includes a review by Christopher Tremblay of S.L. Berger’s College Planning for Gifted Students.

I hope the variety of articles in this edition gives you, our readers, your own ideas for possible articles!
Complexities of Supporting Transgender Students’ Use of Self-Identified First Names and Pronouns

Higher education organizations need to support trans students’ use of self-identified first names (in place of legal names given at birth) and self-identified pronouns (in place of assumed pronouns based on sex assigned at birth or other’s perceptions of physical appearance), but the literature provides little guidance on how best to do so. This article addresses this gap in the literature and uses institutional ethnography (IE) as both a methodology and critical framework for uncovering what IE refers to as texts and relations that can operate in unintended ways to undo practitioners’ efforts to provide consistent and effective support of trans students’ use of self-identified first names and pronouns on campus. The author uses examples from their experience as a higher education LGBTQ resource professional at the University of Vermont (UVM) to add depth to the analysis.
This article examines instances in which transgender students have been outed and/or misgendered or where they have been unable to accurately represent their gender on campus. Such instances occur when trans students are asked to provide personal information through surveys, forms, and processes that lack sufficient choices regarding name, sex, and gender and/or when an inappropriate first name or honorific is used to address or identify students in on-campus settings—for example, on door signs in residence halls, class rosters, e-mail addresses, and directory listings (Beemyn 2005b; Brown et al. 2004; Seelman 2014).

This author attempts to reveal how everyday processes and practices reinforce a fixed, binary gender norm within higher education organizations, effectively rendering people who identify with genders beyond male and female invisible or even ‘impossible’ (Wentling 2015). Specifically, institutional ethnographic analysis is used to examine the intersection of identity information management and communication practices, the needs of students with fluid and non-binary gender identities, and the heteronormative and binary-gendered higher education environment. Institutional ethnography is also used as a critical theoretical framework for raising questions about common expectations and assumptions about how names and gender operate as identity classifiers. The objective is to reveal how seemingly logical assumptions upon which everyday information management activities are built ‘hide in plain sight,’ complicating and frustrating efforts to support transgender students’ use of self-identified names and pronouns in on-campus communications at every turn.

Background

Terms and Language

In this article, the terms “transgender” and “trans” are used interchangeably to refer both to students who transition genders before or during college and to students who occupy non-binary gender identities. The definition below, taken from the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders’ (GLAAD’s) online “Media Reference Guide” provides a common understanding of the term:

Transgender (adj.)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms—including transgender. [Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual.] Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures (GLAAD 2016).
National Context

In May 2016, the United States Office of Civil Rights and Department of Education issued a joint memorandum of understanding on the obligation education organizations have to take proactive steps to address transgender students’ safety and inclusion (Lhamon and Gupta 2016). The first item clarifies schools’ obligation to provide trans students with a safe and nondiscriminatory environment. The second item, pertaining to representation of a trans student’s name and pronoun, says schools must:

*treat students consistent with their gender identity even if their education records or identification documents indicate a different sex. The departments have resolved Title IX investigations with agreements committing that school staff and contractors will use pronouns and names consistent with a transgender student’s gender identity”* (3).

A growing number of colleges and universities are taking steps to meet this need, but many schools have yet to act. Meanwhile, being misnamed and/or misgendered through the use of an inappropriate name or pronoun causes a trans student significant distress and possible threat of physical harm (Beemyn 2003). Members of the staff, faculty, and senior leadership have key roles to play in supporting trans students’ safety and well-being. Practitioners in particular regions may find advocacy efforts complicated by social attitudes and political discourse at both the national and state levels. Nevertheless, existing law affirms transgender students’ right to safe and supportive educational environments.

History of Efforts to Address Trans Student Names and Pronouns at UVM

In 2004, the University of Vermont (UVM) became the first university to allow students to use a paper process to provide alternate first name information that was then manually entered into that student’s class rosters, a practice intended to relieve trans students of having to ‘out’ themselves to their professors prior to the start of each semester. In 2009 UVM once again became the first school in the nation to modify its student information database system (Banner) to provide all students with real-time, web-based control of how their first name and pronouns appear on all Banner-generated, on-campus communications (Tilsley 2010). This change, along with extensive efforts to educate campus affiliates, helped create an exceptionally positive overall campus climate for trans students and earned UVM a place among the top colleges and universities for trans students (Beemyn and Windmeyer 2012). A *New York Times* feature article (Scelfo 2015) about UVM’s inclusion of gender neutral pronouns in its name and pronoun system led to further praise in national and international media (Barrett 2016; Booker 2016; Chak 2015; Collard 2015; Lu 2015; Schoenherr 2015; Williams 2015). UVM’s positive reputation is a fitting tribute and point of pride celebrated throughout the university by students, staff, faculty, and administrators, but the story does not end there. Eight years after implementation, practitioners at UVM continue to uncover instances where transgender students are misnamed (through the inappropriate use of their legal first names) and/or misgendered (through the use of incorrect pronouns and/or honorifics).

Introduction to Institutional Ethnography

Developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005), institutional ethnography (IE) serves both as a methodology and a conceptual framework. IE differs from other forms of ethnography in its specific focus on examining the processes within an organization. While other forms of ethnography are interested in people’s subjective experiences, IE is not concerned with the attitudes of people involved in policy making or service delivery or with criticizing an organization. Rather, IE focuses on “how the interface between the organization and the people it serves gets organized as a matter of the everyday encounters between individuals” (Smith, Mykhalovskiy and Weatherbee 2006, 168).

Institutional ethnography’s focus on intended organizational purposes and the possibility of unintended outcomes makes it well-suited to the topic explored in this article. In 2009, the Economic and Social Research Council’s National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Surrey issued a report entitled “Innovations in Social Science Research Methods” (Xenitidou and Gilbert 2009). Institutional ethnography was included as an effective method for “getting beyond the conceptual frameworks of administration...to the actual circumstances of the diverse lives people live in contemporary societies” (33).
Institutional ethnography can be compared to incident analysis. Like incident analysis (Snook 2002), IE investigates work activities beyond written rules, protocols, standards, and procedures, paying careful attention to what actually takes place. Incident analysis works backward in time, examining conditions, actions, and decisions that precipitated a catastrophe. IE looks at actions and interactions in the present that lead to everyday disjunctures that would go unnoticed by the majority in the absence of closer analysis.

IE’s Specialized Terminology: Disjunctures, Ruling Relations, Standpoints

IE uses the term “disjunctures” to mean everyday practices that appear to function as intended from the standpoint of those enacting policy but that ‘chafe’ from the perspective of those outside the ruling relations. “Ruling relations” refers to underlying perspectives, values, and assumptions that operate at the sociocultural level, imposing undetected influences on the seemingly ‘logical’ ways in which everyday work activities are undertaken. A key concept within the IE framework is the understanding that social constructs, although they are human inventions, can and do become entrenched as social expectations, taking on a hegemonic life of their own. Smith’s (2005) concept of ruling relations should not be confused with formalized procedures or guidelines: Ruling relations are more like molecules of gases in the atmosphere, as unavoidable as they are ubiquitous. They operate beyond active awareness, “hidden in plain sight.”

Because ruling relations follow the social and cultural perspectives of the majority, they lead organizations to undervalue perspectives held by people whose perspectives and experiences differ from the majority. Therefore, as Smith (2005, 2006) notes, disjunctures are best understood from the standpoint of those outside the ruling relations or of people within the organization who possess marginal identities or backgrounds. Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography framework can be used to clarify what can appear to be purposeful resistance to change and other confounding organizational circumstances. By inquiring into unintended outcomes (disjunctures) and what leads to them, IE uncovers ruling relations that hold established practices in place.

Within IE it is expected that policies and their enactment will be perceived differently from different standpoints. For example, the author’s deep background in the testimony of transgender people, role as an advocate for trans student needs, and own genderqueer identity influence their standpoint and the importance they place on trans students’ ability to be referred to using self-identified names and pronouns. This standpoint does not include a cisgender perspective or direct responsibility for managing compliance with detailed regulations involved with students’ identity information (e.g., admission or the registrar).

A trans student’s standpoint differs from the author’s as well as from that of colleagues in admission and the registrar’s office. The trans student may be primarily concerned with avoiding being outed in class and cannot—nor should they have to—know about complexities of existing system architecture that may limit our ability to ‘fix’ the way their name shows up throughout campus. Faculty members represent yet another standpoint, one likely to be focused on managing course content, getting to know students, classroom pedagogy, and their disciplinary expertise. Still another standpoint consists of the host of staff members throughout campus who are responsible for various forms of communications that include the names and assumed gender of students. IE is designed to reveal how each of these standpoints and the “extended bureaucratic, professional, legislative, and economic, as well as other social relations” are involved in producing the local relations that result in disjunctures (Smith, Mykhalovskiy and Weatherbee 2006, 172).

IE Analysis: Mapping Construction of Students’ Gender

In the search for the ruling relations underlying UVM’s unintended outcomes for trans students, the author turned to mapping, one of the tools frequently used by IE researchers. In a study of local zoning processes, Turner (2001) used IE and mapping to illustrate “the text-based organization of the extended relations in which the institutional modes of governing and its politics are put together” (299). Similarly, the present author used mapping to trace a new student’s gender identity as it intersects with the university’s administra-

………………

\footnote{Genderqueer is an evolving term currently in popular use. This author uses the term consistent with the adjective, denoting “a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders” (“genderqueer definition—Google Search,” n.d.).}

\footnote{Cisgender is a recently invented adjective “denoting or relating to a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex; not transgender.” (“cisgender definition—Google Search,” n.d.).}
tive and social contexts (see Table 1). The map begins at a student’s first contact with the university and continues through the day they move in to a residence hall and attend their first day of classes. In each of the seven steps outlined in the map, the markers of a student’s gender identity (their self-identified name and pronoun and/or gender label) are variously requested, accommodated, represented, expressed, witnessed, affirmed, and comprehended—or not. Each social and administrative interaction plays a part in constructing how a student and how others perceive their gender. As they progress through the seven steps, each new student’s gender identity emerges from these everyday relations.

**Tracing the Seven Steps**

Prospective students’ initial encounter with UVM (step 1) consists of filling out UVM’s online form to request information. UVM’s form follows better practices endorsed by the Consortium of LGBTQ Higher Education Professionals in “Consortium Suggested Trans Policy Recommendations” (2014), which recommends not asking for gender or sex when neither is needed and asking only for ‘preferred’ first name. However, during the very next step (step 2), when a student fills out the Common Application, they have historically been locked into identifying themselves by legal name and sex. When a prospective trans student makes contact with admissions staff (step 3), they should encounter people trained in and comfortable with trans students’ use of self-identified first names and pronouns.

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3 Use of the term “preferred” is not recommended; “chosen” or “self-identified” is considered less potentially offensive.

4 As of the 2017 application year, the vendor of the Common Application is adjusting the demographic data entry process to include language specifying sex as “sex assigned at birth” and adding an optional gender identity write-in field. The vendor of the Banner system is working on corresponding adjustments to data fields.
AACRAO Consulting provides you with expert advice and proven solutions to your toughest enrollment challenges.
In step 4, when visitors attend an Admitted Student Visit Day (ASVD), their campus tour might be led by one of UVM’s several student tour guides who identify as non-binary. They may be confused if they notice that non-binary tour guides do not mention their pronouns when introducing themselves. (Tour guides have been instructed not to in order to avoid confusing people unfamiliar with non-binary pronoun usage.) This unstated policy could function as a passive signal to some prospective students about when and how non-binary people’s identities are and are not openly acknowledged at UVM. Another point of confusion may arise from a trans student’s encounter with the admissions visitor’s building, which lacks a non-gendered restroom. A non-binary prospective student may feel forced to misgender themself.

The printed schedule of ASVD events includes the LGBTQA Center Tea, a mini reception held in the LGBTQA Center’s student lounge. Listing an LGBTQA event among other ASVD offerings confers visible institutional support for LGBTQA inclusion. The building containing the LGBTQA Center is equipped with non-gendered restrooms. Visitors interact with staff members who wear name badges with pronouns. Each visitor receives a small gift package that includes staff members’ business cards (with pronouns) and a card that explains how to use non-binary pronouns.

In June (step 5), new students attend orientation. Orientation leaders (OLs) introduce themselves using names and pronouns and wear nametags with pronouns. OLs tell all students about UVM’s system for specifying first names and pronouns and explain the different options. All new students use UVM’s Banner system to register for fall classes and have the opportunity to enter a self-identified first name and/or pronoun at that time. All students are informed that they can access the system to change their first name and pronoun at any time as long as they are a registered student.

New trans students encounter limited options with UVM’s housing system (step 6). Although UVM provides more extensive gender neutral housing options to returning students, assignments require advance identification of mutually agreed-upon roommates. First-time, first-year students are typically unable to identify mutually agreed upon roommate pairs or triads, so they are considered ineligible for this option. A limited number of trans students who contact the LGBTQA Center in advance and who are able to communicate with potential roommates to find a match ahead of time can be placed with a specific roommate in regular housing or in one of several programmed suites set aside for LGBTQA students.

When students arrive on campus (step 7), the signs on their doors should reflect the first names they specified if they used the online system to inform the university of their self-identified first names and pronouns. When students attend their first class two days later, class rosters, advising lists, and Blackboard websites accessed by their faculty members should also reflect this information. From students’ perspectives, the information they provided weeks earlier is now stored in the ‘black box’ of the university’s data systems (see Figure 2). Students have no reason to know where, when, why, and how their information does and does not migrate from one system to another, or even that more than one data system exists. Students and many staff and faculty members assume that student information is held and managed seamlessly within a single central database from which all campus communication and documentation originates. In reality, dozens of staff members throughout the university download student information from the central database and transfer it (as it exists in that moment) into dozens of specialized sub-systems. Each sub-system operates independent of every other as well as of the central database. Only the IT professionals within a particular department know how and when students’ information is accessed and what is done with it.

For several years, LGBTQA Center staff have been investigating instances where a student’s legal first name or gender/sex marker has been used inappropriately. Recent instances have included, for example, trans students being assigned to room with a gender-inappropriate roommate during orientation; a grad application generating letter of reference requests that used legal instead of self-identified first name; a formal letter announcing an award that used the incorrect name; and receiving an e-mail invitation to participate in an inappropriately gender-based survey or an inappro-

\* Use of “themself” is intentional to denote gender beyond the male/female binary.
\* Since this system was instituted (in 2009), the registrar’s office has seen no measurable abuse by students and has received almost no complaints from faculty members.

\* Door signs prepared by student resident assistants based on lists supplied to them have been a source of repeated problems, with different reasons for errors in each instance.
appropriately gendered event. Investigations have revealed a more complicated (but still ‘black box’) visualization of the path student data take through and among the university’s many data systems. The diagrams in Figures 1 and 2 seek to illustrate the contrasts between these conceptualizations and the registrar’s perspective on how UVM’s ‘preferred name’ system ‘works.’ The small PC icon at the bottom left of the final diagram inadequately represents the extent of the auxiliary systems and the many different schedules used to access student information from the central database.

During the design phase of UVM’s online name and pronoun system, a task force met over a period of four months to deliberate over data management design questions. Task force members included a fourth-year, trans/non-binary student, a faculty member with experience teaching trans students, and a member of the LGBTQA Center staff with several years’ experience supporting trans students’ name and pronoun needs. These individuals provided system designers with insights based on actual experience.

One such insight concerned the practice of sharing information about honors and awards with hometown newspapers. Whereas some undergraduates might be happy to have awards and honors they have received published in their hometown newspapers, students who have transitioned during college may be known on campus by their self-identified first names and pronouns they have entered into the central database while circumstances may have led them to withhold this information from peers and/or family at home. One trans student might choose to have their legal name used in their hometown paper while another might prefer not to have their name appear at all.

Two recent studies illustrate how a lack of adequate knowledge about gender identity diversity can make education professionals vulnerable to serious (though unintentional) errors in judgment that can compromise the safety and well-being of trans students (Rosiek and Heffernan 2014, Woolley 2015). UVM practitioners avoid some such errors thanks in large part to expert advice provided directly and indirectly by trans individuals. But just as the previously mentioned studies suggest, unintentional misgendering and misnaming of students persists despite sound design of the centralized system. Judgments and decisions of individual
data managers may seem logical and straightforward, but they fail to take into account the particular needs and circumstances of people with gender identities that fall outside traditional notions of sex and gender.

**Investigating Disjunctures: When Trans Students Are Misnamed or Misgendered**

As LGBTQA Center and other staff members trace instances in which trans students have been outed and/or misgendered, they find processes that appear to be working according to design. Further investigations eventually uncover assumptions hidden within benign details such as the timing of acquiring and updating data or what fields have been included in template reports. Once name information has been collected, data managers don’t necessarily consider how it should be used or for how long before it is considered unreliable or out of date. Automated data crosscheck processes may not be designed to detect purposeful first name changes. Few practitioners consider exactly what information is held in the central database field marked ‘gender’: Is it the sex marker assigned by a medical professional at birth, or is it the individual’s self-reported gender identifier? Extensive discussion is required to
determine the appropriate uses of either of those pieces of information.

**How Binary Gender Ruling Relations Lead to Misnaming and Misgendering Trans Students**

A host of erroneous assumptions arise out of binary gender ruling relations. One is the idea that using a person’s legal first name on a form of documentation should not cause that person harm. Another is the idea that sex assigned at birth is a reasonable identifier to use to determine the sex and/or gender of an individual, that person’s roommate assignment, the locker room they need to access, and whether to invite them to apply for organizations, programs, fellowships, and other opportunities reserved either for men or for women. Another common erroneous assumption is the decision to address individuals with an automatically assigned title of Mr. or Ms. (based on the content of a data field populated with a marker that most likely represents sex assigned at birth) as a way to convey respect. This error is made in addressing all kinds of correspondence during a student’s tenure as well as after they have become an alumnx.⁸

**IE Analysis: Discussion**

Untangling the layers of institutional binary gender practice is complicated by the interwoven practices of multiple institutions. For example, states mandate the binary sex assignment of newborn infants, which in turn is documented on birth certificates, the primary form of legal identification. States also determine individuals’ options regarding changing a birth sex marker.⁹ The federal Census counts population by binary sex categories; the federal government issues passports that include a binary sex marker. All of these practices have an impact on school registration processes, driver’s licenses, marriage licenses, and higher education recruitment and acceptance strategies and practices. These institutional practices have been so perfectly aligned and tightly coordinated that they have functioned as a monolithic, seemingly unproblematic binary gender regime.

By the time individuals complete their formal education, they have become inured to institutionalized practices that seem to ‘prove’ sex = gender = M or F (circle one) (see Figure 3). It is little wonder that people who have yet to be introduced more thoroughly to the concept of gender diversity are, as Rosiek and Heffer-

![Figure 3. Binary Gender as Institutionalized Practice](image)

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⁸ Alumnx has recently come into use among trans advocates so as to avoid the binary gendered alumna, alumnae, alumnus, and alumni.

⁹ Information published on the Lambda Legal Web site (last updated in February 2015) indicates that Idaho, Kansas, Ohio, and Tennessee “will not issue a birth certificate indicating the proper sex” (Changing Birth Certificate Sex Designations 2015).
nan (2014) found, “unable to imagine or discuss [or account for] what they have no words or concepts to think about” (732, bracketed text added by this author).

This monolithic alignment of institutional binary gender practice has evolved over several centuries and makes binary sex and gender seem ‘natural,’ logical, immutable, and interchangeable. Disjuncture, or misalignment, between a system and a particular person’s needs seems to imply that the single person should change in order to align with the system, not the other way around. Most, if not all, western societies have demanded such conformity for centuries, causing people whose inner sensibilities have extended beyond binary gender norms great harm.

In recent years, as trans people and trans activism have led to institutional gender practices that are less aligned, it has become easier to see how each process is based on constructed logic, not immutable facts of nature. In a recent meeting with data managers, conversation turned to the complicated scenario that will arise when we have a trans student from a state that does not permit a legal change of the birth sex marker on their birth certificate. The challenge to the university data manager will be how to find all the places that information appears on vendor-designed templates so as to avoid causing a trans student distress or potential safety concerns when that information leads to confusion about their gender identity and/or presenting sex.

Conclusion

The central focus of this article is how binary gender hegemony and the unexamined assumptions that derive from a binary, gender = sex framework can be understood through an IE framework. These ruling relations operate out of view within higher education identity management and communications practices in ways that complicate and frustrate practitioners’ efforts to support trans students’ use of self-identified first names and pronouns on campus. The article articulates concepts practitioners can use to advance organizational and cultural changes needed to provide effective, consistent support for transgender students’ use of self-identified first names and pronouns in higher education settings. All higher education practitioners should become familiar with the significant guidance about what needs to be changed in order to accommodate the needs of trans students and understand why such action is necessary (Beemyn 2005a; McKinney 2005; Singh, Meng and Hansen 2013). Additional research is needed regarding how the gendered workings of higher education must be changed in order to correct the current misalignment among existing systems, common practices, and the needs of trans students.

A portion of the work ahead must include actively dismantling practices and processes that maintain the binary sex/gender regime. Data practitioners need to think critically about the many reasons a university student might want to use a first name other than their legal/birth name (e.g., international students or students who have always been known by a nickname). Neither sex nor gender should be included on forms when there is no planned use for the information; instead, data managers should seek more clarity about what information is being requested and whether the intended use is appropriate. Language that imposes binary gender limitations—such as Mr. and Ms. and gendered terms such as alumna and alumnus—should be eliminated. New alternatives, such as alumnx and Mx., need to be explored. While these sound strange and unfamiliar today, such alternatives are needed to replace terms that limit our ability to fully include trans and non-binary people. As long as hegemonic binary gender practices and assumptions are left unexamined, they will continue to operate in the background, determining how students’ environments, experiences, and identities are shaped.

10 One reason to record the biological sex of a person’s reproductive organs might be to maintain records about reproductive cancer screenings and other hormonally related health issues. Another is as a test for identity authentication. Gender is almost always asked in order to assume the gender of the roommate(s) a person will be most comfortable living with and the bathroom and shower facilities a person will need to access. All of these are potentially problematic for trans individuals.

11 Limitations on what data appear (and where and how they appear) on reports that are built into third-party software are likely to continue to complicate efforts to improve name and gender indicators in the immediate future. Only by working actively to change expectations will systems change.
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About the Author

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Unseen Differences: Cultural Diversity among Hispanic and Latino Students

To promote inclusion and creating a welcoming environment for an increasingly diverse population of undergraduate students, many institutions invest heavily in the development of programs and resources that celebrate diversity and encourage meaningful interactions. Noble though they may be, these efforts often fail to account for the truly infinite diversity of human experience. Students may be unduly homogenized based on a single dimension of their identity, and administrators may be largely unaware of subcultural differences that lead to intergroup enmity.

This study attempts to expose the root causes of these misunderstandings among the members of the Hispanic/Latino community at a small private liberal arts university, as well as what students believe the institution can do to close the divide. Eight domestic and international Hispanic/Latino students were interviewed regarding the divisions between their subgroups, the underlying reasons, and their suggestions to bridge the gap. Researchers distill and explore the primary themes of intragroup racism and marginalization, a perceived lack of institutional resources, and the social influence of socioeconomic status. The results of the study inform recommendations for the creation and improvement of programs that will be effective in attracting and retaining Hispanic/Latino students from various backgrounds, as well as initiatives that may improve intra- and intergroup harmony.
As of July 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that Hispanics and Latinos (H&Ls) accounted for 17 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2013a). (Hispanic refers to any person living in or from a Spanish-speaking country and therefore includes Spain but not Brazil. Latino refers to any person living in or from Latin America and therefore includes Brazil but not Spain. For the purposes of this article, Hispanics and Latinos are abbreviated as “H&Ls,” with the recognition that they are two distinct terms [Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987].) However, this group is underrepresented in higher education, with only 6.4 percent of college-aged H&Ls enrolled in higher education. Perhaps in part because of this underrepresentation and small numbers of H&Ls and also to simplify reporting and planning, colleges and universities historically have categorized the subgroups comprising the H&L community as a single group. Whether because they speak the same language or because of their ethnicity, it is a common and convenient belief that H&Ls “are all the same.” However, a large variety of cultural permutations distinguish H&L subgroups, and universities must recognize and acknowledge these differences if they wish to meet the needs of every student.

Students who identify as H&L express their culture in a variety of ways. They also have a range of motivations for pursuing higher education. In a training manual for child welfare workers in Georgia’s Division of Family and Children Services, Rice-Rodriguez and Boyle (2006) note that U.S. Latinos have differing social, economic, and political reasons for residing in the United States. Moreover, this diverse population comes from different countries and cultures; failing to recognize the disparate ways in which individuals self-identify leads to inaccurate generalizations, erroneous assumptions, and reliance on cultural stereotypes (Rice-Rodriguez and Boyle 2006).

At the medium-sized, private, primarily white institution that is the focus of this study, 5.4 percent of the student body is Hispanic and/or Latino. Despite the institution’s stated goal of recruiting and admitting a diverse student body, H&Ls and other minority groups remain similarly underrepresented: Asian American students constitute 2.2 percent of the undergraduate population, African American students 5.6 percent, and American Indian students 0.3 percent. To retain and attract a greater percentage of H&L students while also improving their general satisfaction, institutions should consider acknowledging and supporting the subcultural variety among them. For example, many colleges and universities provide access to campus resources that encourage and enable such students to speak their language comfortably, cook their native food, and interact with other H&L students. Programs to integrate this student population into the institution featured in this study are in place—for example, the Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity Education and a mentoring program designed for underrepresented students. However, the programs’ effectiveness with regard to retention, degree completion, academic success, or general student satisfaction has yet to be assessed.
One reason it is vital to evaluate these programs’ effectiveness is that they are frequently designed without mention of subcultural differences, when in fact there is rich diversity among H&Ls. A survey of diversity and inclusion statements at peer and aspirant institutions confirms that diversity is valued in higher education, but its definition and understanding vary. One of James Madison University’s goals states: “The university will continue personal and professional development related to enhancing understanding of diversity while leveraging increased diversity through university/community partnerships” (James Madison University n.d.). Loyola University of Maryland “strives to increase student awareness of and critical understanding of three aspects of human diversity: differences across nations and world cultures, especially those outside the Western intellectual tradition; experiences of distinct minority groups in the United States; and justice-oriented movements or intellectual traditions that address diversity and systems of injustice” (Loyola University Maryland n.d.). Loyola’s statement is more specific than James Madison’s, acknowledging the value of both the diversity across different countries and also of the diversity among groups in the United States. Though this could be considered a minor difference, diversity and inclusion statements are frequently considered when shaping policies and recommendations for student subpopulations (similar to the way in which mission statements often guide strategic plans).

Many of the members of the H&L population at the university considered in this study cite a rift between two subcultures—a rift of which many Americans and administrators are unaware: domestic H&Ls (those born and raised in the United States) and international H&Ls (those born and raised outside the United States). International students are classified as such from an enrollment perspective, but they often are grouped homogeneously with domestic students when they arrive on campus. The rift is visible to some students, faculty, and staff within the institution’s H&L community, but it is not actively addressed by administration. At times the groups are at odds with each other. Ostensibly, a shared language and similar culture “should” serve as a point of connection for these students, but often they do not. Instead, many H&L students arrive at the institution, find their subgroup, and never question the social division they have inherited from their predecessors.

The small size of the H&L population at this institution is a distinct disadvantage for these students, as it may prevent the development of a healthy group dynamic and interaction among H&Ls. Schools with a more robust population of H&L students may allow for the natural development of more subgroups, with a combination of domestic and international H&L students. By contrast, within the small undergraduate population of H&L students at this institution, students divide themselves as domestic versus international H&Ls. The differences between them often are more apparent than their similarities.

A core commitment outlined in the institution’s mission statement is to foster “a respect for human differences.” It follows that acknowledging and addressing the separation between domestic and international H&L students should be of vital importance to the community. A persistent tension between domestic and international H&L students could erode the confidence of both groups in the ability of the institution to mediate misunderstandings and promote diversity—and thereby undermine student satisfaction and retention. Students who remain within their own subgroup may feel reluctant to interact with the institution’s broader H&L population at school-sponsored and social events. These dynamics may generate feelings of discomfort and exclusion among H&Ls. Administrators, admission staff, and senior staff must be aware of this potential for disconnection, because retaining and graduating its students—as well as attracting more students from underrepresented groups—is a high priority.

There is currently a gap in the research on H&L student populations. Previous research focused on H&L retention rates but lacks studies on subgroups within the H&L student population. This research aims to begin bridging this gap by identifying the underlying factors contributing to the domestic/international H&L rift and suggesting solutions for institutions to identify and repair it. Specifically, the authors discuss programs intended to foster acceptance within and across culture—programs that encourage students to focus on their similarities rather than their differences.

Literature Review

The H&L community is the fastest growing minority group in the nation, representing 17 percent of the U.S. population as of the 2014 Census (U.S. Census Bureau
The rapid growth of the H&L population suggests that it may not always be a minority in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s population projections, the H&L population is expected to increase dramatically over the next few decades, reaching about 28.6 percent in 2060 (Colby and Ortman 2015). This would make the Hispanic/ Latino population larger than the Asian population, which is expected to represent 11.7 percent of the U.S. population, and larger than the black or African American population, which is expected to increase to 17.9 percent of the U.S. population by 2060 (Colby and Ortman 2015).

Historically, such population shifts are reflected in U.S. college and university enrollment. In 2003, 8.3 percent of Hispanics and 17.9 percent of the total U.S. population earned a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2003). In 2013, 10.7 percent of Hispanics and 20.1 percent of the total U.S. population earned a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2013a). As the percentage of Hispanics and Latinos in the United States increases, so does the percentage of H&L students earning a bachelor’s degree. Not only are H&L students attending college in greater numbers, but their degree completion rates for undergraduate as well as advanced degrees are also increasing (Santiago and Soliz 2012).

Yet while progress has been made overall, the subcultural differences between domestic and international Hispanic and Latino students represent an often-overlooked challenge that could impact retention. Administrators often classify all H&L students into one ethnic category, but the subgroups within H&L communities can have very different attitudes, outlooks, and needs. These distinctions are frequently disregarded by university administrators. Universities that remain unaware of these distinctions risk fostering feelings of isolation or exclusion among students, who may feel that the institution’s programs and resources are designed for a Hispanic archetype and not actually geared toward them.

While little research has addressed the subcultural divide between international and domestic H&L students on university campuses, there is literature on the reported differences between these two groups in the general population. For example, the authors of Latinos in the New Millennium (Fraga et al. 2012) interpret findings from the Latino National Survey suggesting that those born outside the United States feel pressure to acculturate to American society and therefore work harder to fit in. By contrast, Latinos born in the United States have already “‘blended in’ linguistically and culturally, and so, paradoxically, place less of an emphasis on the need to further do so” (Fraga et al. 2012, 92).

Understanding students’ experiences of intraracial discrimination or “discrimination occurring within a particular race” (Busey 2014) in the H&L community at an institution can inform the creation of programs that foster a more inclusive environment. Creating a more accepting community may result in happier students and increased student success, which in turn could benefit the institution via increased retention and degree completion as well as improved alumni participation rates. Previous research has examined the experiences of underrepresented students enrolled at predominantly white institutions, barriers to access and success in higher education for underrepresented students, and broader issues facing H&Ls in the United States. This prior research presents students’ experiences as minorities and provides a survey of existing programs that seek to create more inclusive communities.

Although subgroups are present in most communities, especially in the proverbial melting pot of the modern university, there is a lack of research on subgroups within the H&L culture. According to Sáenz (2010), some of the largest ethnic subgroups among Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Salvadorans, Cubans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Hondurans, Spaniards, and Ecuadorians. An important feature of this subcultural variety is dialectal variation. Each subgroup speaks Spanish, yet each might have different words or expressions to convey certain meanings. For example, when talking about a nickname, a Puerto Rican might say *tipo* or *loco* whereas a Costa Rican might say *mae*. Though such differences may seem trivial to non–Spanish speakers, the Spanish language is an essential part of the H&L culture.

In Latinos in Higher Education: Creating Conditions for Student Success (Núñez et al. 2013), the authors note that Latino college students who study in the United States reference communicating in English versus Spanish as an important element of their ethnic expression and identity. The language a student’s parents spoke at home often determined whether they identified as Latino and the degree to which they were acculturated to and identified with American values. Even if they do not regularly speak Spanish, preserving the language is an aspect of the culture that many H&Ls find very important. Data gathered from the Latino National Sur-
vey suggests that “Latinos born in the United States are more likely to support the view that Latinos should retain the ability to speak Spanish, even if they no longer use it as their primary language” (Fraga et al. 2012, 91).

Diversification of the student body is a critical step toward creating a more inclusive community within the broader campus community, but merely admitting a significant number of H&L students does not guarantee an inclusive campus climate. The institution’s administration, faculty, staff, and senior staff must work intentionally to support diverse populations once they have matriculated (Núñez et al. 2013, 74). Hernandez (2000) investigated the factors that influence retention and academic success among Latino students and identified eleven that are crucial. All of the participants reported that a specific family member, counselor, or advisor had a positive impact on their continuing education. They also described the importance of being involved in a variety of organizations and the impact of being involved both on and off campus. The participants also indicated that one of the most important reasons for staying in school was the ability to meet other Latinos on a predominantly white campus. They explained that this connection allowed them to see that other students with similar backgrounds were succeeding, and this motivated them and gave them confidence in their own ability to achieve their educational goals (Hernandez 2000).

Hernandez (2000) found that finances also impact the retention and academic performance of Latino students. For students who struggle to pay for their college education, finances are an additional stressor with a negative impact. For students whose parents support them or who have sufficient scholarships or financial aid, their financial stability positively influenced their academic performance and retention (Hernandez 2000).

Socioeconomic status can create a divide between college students. In the United States, for example, “the educational achievement of Cubans is the highest among Latinos” (Pew Hispanic Center 2011), and Cuban Americans also have a higher average socioeconomic status than many other H&L ethnic subgroups (Núñez et al. 2013). This socioeconomic gap may create tension within the greater H&L community. On an individual level, it may affect whether students decide to stay in school or leave (Núñez et al. 2013).

Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002) found that cultural centers provide a much-needed haven for minority students on predominantly white campuses. Many such institutions create cultural centers to enhance interaction and promote inclusion and thereby contribute to a sense of belonging and acceptance, especially among domestic and international H&Ls (even if there are subcultural differences between them). Respecting subgroups while still encouraging differences will for allow a “salad bowl” of differences—an integration of the varying cultures—rather than a “melting pot” wherein different cultures become more homogeneous. By creating an inclusive community, the institution can help groups discover similarities in language, values, and beliefs while preserving the salient qualities of their distinct cultures.

Inclusion, both within the H&L community and between its community and others, is an important factor in retaining students. Hernandez (2000) found that H&L students identified a need for belonging and inclusion within the broader college community and emphasized the importance of having a stable support group of friends and peers as a necessary aspect of college life. These friends were described as the people who push their peers to do better and guide them by introducing them to college life (Hernandez 2000).

Teranishi (2007) examined the impact of experiential learning on Latino/a college students’ development during a community service trip to Guanajuato, México. The students kept journals in which they reflected on identity, relationships, and inequalities. Teranishi (2007) found that the students experienced increased self-efficacy, civic participation, career preparedness, and understanding of diversity as a result of this experiential learning opportunity. Understanding their ethnic identity is an integral part of Latino students’ college experience. The students explained how participating in this course provided a deeper understanding of their sense of self. One participant stated that she felt a desire to be herself. Others talked about appreciating their classmates more after learning about their backgrounds. Replicating this type of experience could allow students to talk openly about similarities and differences between their experiences.

Teranishi (2007) also found that growing up in a certain community influenced students to make friends with people from the same ethnic or cultural groups. By taking students out of their familiar context and away from those with whom they normally interacted, this trip allowed them to meet new people and develop
strong friendships with students they otherwise might not have met. This experience also allowed students to “develop a heightened awareness of the structural inequalities that create barriers to their access and mobility in attaining their educational and career goals” (Teranishi 2007, 63).

Living with host families provided opportunities for students to see the differences between their families and the families of other cultures and to identify how family dynamics, sexism, and discrimination prevent certain people from forging their own identities. Through this experience, students improved their understanding of diversity, stereotypes, and multiculturalism. They were able to think about their identity as influenced by their cultural context and not simply as the outcome of genetic contributions. They were also able to describe their identities as more dynamic and complex rather than viewing themselves in terms of one-dimensional categories such as “Mexican” or “American.” They embraced their unique identity as H&L along with the multiple additional identities that constitute their backgrounds.

Teranishi’s (2007) study demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential learning in teaching students about their own ethnic and cultural identities while also broadening their understanding of others’ backgrounds. Giving H&L students more opportunities to study abroad may also help them develop a stronger sense of their identity. This increased self-awareness and knowledge of others may subsequently help them build stronger relationships with students from other ethnic or cultural groups.

Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) explored the factors that affect Latino student adjustment in college and found that racial and ethnic minorities face additional stressors such as interracial conflict disproportionately more than white students do. One way to diminish the impact of these additional stressors is to implement targeted support systems such as mentoring or other programs for underrepresented students. The authors cautioned that admitting a diverse student population does not in itself ensure that disparate groups will come together. Rather, institutions must provide accessible resources to foster a more inclusive community and facilitate interaction among students with both similar and diverse backgrounds and experiences. Divisions within the broader community or within its various ethnic and racial groups and subgroups will only create exclusivity and intimidation that are as damaging to the institution as to the individuals.

Methodology

The sample population included undergraduates enrolled at a medium-sized private liberal arts university who had self-identified as Hispanic or Latino on their application to the university. All participants were at least eighteen years of age. Interviews were conducted in a safe, comfortable, and neutral environment on campus. Prior to each interview, participants completed consent forms that outlined the purpose of the study and the intentions of the researchers.

The participants first were asked to respond to demographic questions. They then were asked a series of questions about their experiences of intraracial discrimination at the institution, their identification with the Hispanic and/or Latino community, their views on subgroups within the community, how this community had affected them, and suggestions for programs that might help the community become more inclusive. Each interview lasted a maximum of 45 minutes.

A snowball sampling technique was used to identify the study’s eight participants. Interviews were transcribed and compared in depth to uncover patterns in the students’ responses. These patterns were coded and organized to identify recurring themes. For this article, Spanish citations were translated into English, and participants’ names were changed to ensure confidentiality.

Results

After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed, and each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. The transcripts were then coded to identify main themes. The following themes emerged: racism and marginalization, lack of resources, and socioeconomic status. Subthemes of enculturation and language barriers also emerged.

Racism is defined as prejudice or discrimination directed against a given racial group based on the belief that another racial group is superior. Students described having experienced racism from the institution itself, from students who were members of the dominant culture, and from other H&L students. Marginalization is defined as the social exclusion or disadvantage that students feel as a result of being separated from
another group. Lack of resources refers both to the lack of services the university provides (as of spring 2016) for H&L students to interact as a community and to the support the university offers them. Socioeconomic status refers to the hierarchy and separation that occurs between students of differing economic means.

Racism and Marginalization

All participants described experiences of racism or bigotry, whether on the part of the school, students of the dominant culture, or other H&L students. Many participants described the discomfort they felt from the institution, and especially from a resource called El Centro, whose purpose was to help English-speaking students learn and practice Spanish and meet other students. Although a complementary component of El Centro’s mission is to serve as a support system for domestic and international H&L students, most domestic students don’t feel welcomed or supported in this environment. Maite described her experiences with this resource:

I did come to El Centro at the beginning but it didn’t feel as welcoming. And it was...a little intimidating. I couldn’t really tell who were student workers, who weren’t; I think it was just people who were hanging out there in that moment, and walking in looking at me weird, like, “Who are you? What are you doing here?” kind of thing. But not in a welcoming...it didn’t feel like it was in a welcoming way.

Similarly, Elena recalled:

I feel like at some points—I know definitely my freshman year—I was a bit intimidated the first time I stepped into El Centro. …[It] just gave me a very cold vibe. I went in there friendly, obviously I was very shy my first year, but I went in there with the intention of getting to know people. And I don’t know, I just felt a very off-put, you-don’t-belong-here vibe.

El Centro is often used as a hangout by international H&L students despite its being intended primarily for English speakers. Maite and other domestic H&L students point to this as a reason for their discomfort. Despite being an international H&L student, Elena also felt uncomfortable coming into El Centro. She explained that when she came to the university, she felt obligated to choose one group. Because her father is American, she felt she could identify better with the domestic students and so spent most of her time with that subgroup. Intercultural differences prevent those already in El Centro from being more welcoming to other H&L students. If not immediately identifiable as “birds of a feather,” students are not typically greeted warmly. Participants described this as originating from an unspoken sense of cultural difference.

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* Country in which participants were raised for most of their lives.
Participants also described feeling discomfort or alienation as a result of what they perceived as the institution’s separation of minority from majority students. Participants reported that the institution underscored their differences and isolated them from other students through university-sponsored events focused on minority students. Mariana noted, “It always bothered me saying to everyone, ‘I’m different and this is why you should accept me.’ Because I felt like I already should have been accepted.” Mariana stressed that she felt as though she had to explain why she should be accepted and that the events the university creates for minority students make them feel they are separate from the rest of the students.

When asked how she felt about being an international student, Catalina echoed Mariana’s sentiments: “I had ‘international move-in day.’ I had a lot of [experiences] that separated me.” Mariana also felt this sense of separation in the classroom, “As a Puerto Rican student I’m always being asked to clarify if I’m ‘international’ or not. But here at [the university] there’s a thin line, and you’re kind of labeled with that in your classes. I don’t know what I am. It’s not uncomfortable, but it’s not super comfortable.”

Like Mariana, Daniel often feels uncomfortable and insecure on campus:

“Well, there’s not something that prevents you from practicing your culture or anything that in particular belongs to you, but you feel a sense of not belonging if you do it. [L]et’s say you’re with your friends, and you’re in the cafeteria talking in Spanish…sometimes it feels like you’re being judged or looked at differently just because you are different. Because there are not that many Latinos on campus…it almost makes you feel insecure at times.

Other participants also described acts of prejudice in response to their speaking Spanish in public. Maite recalled an occasion on which she was judged for speaking Spanish. She recounts, “I have also had those uncomfortable moments where I’ll speak Spanish and have people be like, ‘Stop speaking Spanish. You’re in America.’ Or ‘You don’t belong here.’ And that has happened here at [the university].”

Mariana recounted a similar experience. “Sometimes you’re talking Spanish and people look at you weirdly, or sometimes you say things and people don’t understand and they kind of bother you with it.” Nicole likewise described what began as a common encounter on campus, noting, “We were speaking in Spanish and someone said, ‘This is America; we speak English here.’”

In addition to experiencing prejudice from the university and its non-H&L students, all participants expressed feeling a sense of separation between the subgroups of H&L students. Many students are aware of an unspoken norm that results in a separation between H&L students who are international (i.e., born and raised in another country) versus domestic (i.e., born and raised in the United States). Elena described feeling a subtle pressure to choose one group or the other: “I just know that when I came here, I felt like I was obligated to choose between [them]. And because my dad is American, I grew up with both cultures at the same time. Well, I wasn’t necessarily told I couldn’t be with both; it just came out that way and felt that way.”

Mariana, an international H&L student, talked about how international students view domestic students:

“It’s almost like a lot of international students believe that [domestic students] are not really Latinos because they live in the United States, even though they have strong cultural backgrounds that match with ours. At the same time, there is some tension that the domestic Latinos hold against us that I’m not really fully aware of; maybe it’s because they feel left out by us. A lot of people say they’re not real Latinos. Or they’d [say], “they don’t understand us,” or others feel like they shouldn’t be so prideful about being Latino because they live in the United States, therefore they’re supposed to be more adapted than us.

As an international H&L student, Mariana struggled to understand why domestic H&L students didn’t interact with her as much as they did with one another.

Conversely, Camila, a domestic H&L student, explained why she decided to keep her distance from the international H&L students:

“I have chosen not to talk to many international students because I’ve heard where they come from or who they are and so I don’t know how to initiate a conversation. But sometimes you can see [privilege]; you can see it on the physical or surface level of where someone comes from, and you can notice from the background that someone comes and that also sets up a boundary when you haven’t been exposed to that level. What people tell me [about the separation] has definitely
affected me because I have the idea in my head [of a separation], and then you think about it and think “maybe I shouldn’t even start a conversation.” But also [the internationals] don’t give you the opportunity to speak with them, so that’s also something I’ve experienced. Based on those experiences I simply chose not to interact with the people on campus. It was my personal choice to step back.

Results show that upperclassmen had a clear influence on incoming students. Along with Camila, many other participants also expressed the impact of other students on their thinking about the H&L student separation. The mere presumption of racism or discrimination by another subgroup, as suggested by the opinions of upperclassmen, influences younger students to behave differently with other H&L students. This creates an ongoing cycle in which each cohort of H&L students is warned about this issue, acts more cautiously as a result, and thereby reinforces the other group’s biased beliefs about them.

Daniel’s experience highlights this issue:

I don’t feel like I have any problems associating with [international H&L students], but it’s just that it’s been stated that there is a certain division. I’ve been told. I haven’t seen this personally because any time I see someone who is international I don’t seem to have a problem talking to them at all, but it’s just been like a norm. I think the separation is mostly influenced by what others have told me. I mean I was told about this separation and I heard it from both sides. And well, I thought maybe they don’t want to talk to me or maybe I can’t approach them because of this. In a certain way I feel prejudiced.

Many students also identify a generational difference within the groups. They describe how older students on campus have accepted the separation for years, sometimes intentionally disengaging from the other subgroups. First-year and other younger students, however, have begun to question the separation and to express a desire to integrate the groups. Maite, a senior, referenced this generational difference, saying, “It was a lot of the older generations and we just sort of accepted it instead of questioning it. But I’m glad that the younger classes are questioning it and wanting to make that difference and wanting to declare, ‘No, this isn’t right.’”

Lack of Resources

The second overarching theme that emerged from the participants’ responses was the lack of resources at the institution for underrepresented students. Six of the eight participants referenced this theme. Students discussed a lack of opportunities, mentors, scholarships, and even comfortable spaces on campus for underrepresented students. Participants also identified a lack of diversity and inclusion within the college campus.

Elena described wanting a comfortable space where Hispanic/Latino students could come together rather than a space like El Centro in which they were expected to educate others:

Somewhere where we can be ourselves, without it being an educational basis for others, without it having its purpose being us teaching others about our cultures, a space where it’s just us. We have nothing where we are just a social group.

Mariana echoed this point, noting, “A lot of their resources are for the H&L community to help the American community, which I like, but not specifically resources for us to come together as a community.”

While participants wanted a social space where they did not feel pressured to educate others, they were also aware of the negative effects this separation could have. They acknowledged the importance of other students learning about their culture. Camila expressed her views about the lack of diversity education on campus:

I just think that international students will forever be seen as you’re either wealthy or you’re an athlete, and so I guess maybe educating students and telling students more often that that’s not always the case because that’s the basic assumption that we have. Because most people have no idea what it means to be an international student here at [the university]. I don’t know how they get here, who they are.

The students also noted a lack of diversity among the administrators on campus. Alejandro felt strongly about the importance of increasing the number of H&L administrators as well as the group’s overall representation on campus:

I want more Latino administration and more Latino representation. . . If I could have one thing on this campus it would be to have 15 percent Latino. If we put
more efforts into getting students of color, preferably Latino, things would change.

Alejandro also advocated for more H&L role models, authentic H&L food, and activities highlighting the culture on campus.

Socioeconomic Status

The third theme was socioeconomic status, which six of the study’s eight participants identified as a barrier to both academic and social integration on campus. Participants noted how differing socioeconomic backgrounds could create different experiences for students, reinforcing the separation between international and domestic H&L students. Camila summarizes the comments of many of the participants when she observes, “In my opinion it has to do a lot with socioeconomic status. And although we all belong to the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and race, our backgrounds are not the same.”

Maite elaborated on this:

I think a lot of it is just international students have that opportunity to come to the United States to study, and that obviously takes some money. Some [must be from a strong] economic background to be able to afford that, versus a lot of the domestic students that are Latino aren’t—they are here on scholarships or work their way through school.

But I think that because of that, growing up in Latin America, having those opportunities to be in Latin America and coming to the United States, they are going to hitch together a lot more versus the domestic students who... I think a lot of times it’s like we’re not Latino enough... because we didn’t grow up in Latin America, we grew up here.

So I think that a lot of the students that come from Latin America or are international students [are] going to come from the nicer, wealthier parts, and so there’s that social divide within that. And they’re coming to [the university], where it is a predominantly nicer school, [and] kids come from nicer backgrounds... [and] yes, there might be a difference between them like race, like whites versus Latinos, but in a way they understand each other because they come from a similar social class.

Alejandro observed:

A lot of the students that are domestic here, at least from what I know, don’t usually have or aren’t part of the high socioeconomic status. Because a lot of them are scholars, that’s how I know them. That’s not to say that there aren’t people of high socioeconomic status that are domestic because some people are, but I feel like many of [the international students] are here to gain knowledge and education and take what they have learned here and harness it and take it back to their country. Whereas here, I have to deal with whatever mess I create. I feel like there is also a divide in perhaps socioeconomic status as well.

Mariana noted:

I also think is also has a lot to do with socioeconomic backgrounds between domestic and international Latinos. That really weighs in a lot of factors in America and how difficult it is for families that move to the United States to be better to... either escape from political oppression or escape from people who are presenting a threat to them, whether it’d be economically or socially or politically. The way they had to work hard in the United States to be who they are now and to reach the level where they are now. In many cases, Latin America is a very class-based society. So when people see that the majority of internationals come from an entirely different world...sometimes they look at them and they don’t notice [the difference in how they act].

Daniel expressed similar thoughts:

I do think it also has to do with socioeconomic status to a certain extent. I feel like maybe the reason why some domestic students can’t socialize with international students is because of the socioeconomic difference. I might be wrong, but maybe some international students are pretty wealthy.

Some students went so far as to identify this issue as the primary reason they did not want to engage in conversation with other H&L students. Camila said, “Socioeconomic status kind of makes you want to step back and not initiate a conversation.” Such comments illustrate the extent to which socioeconomic status impacts H&L students’ social lives on campus.

Mariana proposed increasing diversity at the institution as a way to help dismantle the barriers to social interaction that such differences create:
I do think [the university] has to offer more scholarships for Latin American students—international as well as domestic—because there’s a big problem in the university as a whole, and it’s not only about race and ethnicity but also about socioeconomic diversity. And it’s a big problem because to be in a university and see everyone from a certain class…I don’t know, it’s not socially diverse. It really is for our benefit, and I think scholarships for Latin American students would help a lot.

Enculturation and Language Barriers

Another common theme that emerged among the participants was the difference in levels of enculturation between domestic and international H&L students as a result of their different experiences in the United States. Five of the eight participants referenced this theme. Participants noted that because domestic H&L students have lived in the United States for most or all of their lives, when they arrive at college they only have to adjust to a new setting within their own country. In contrast, international H&L students must adjust to a completely different culture and country, as well as to college life. In addition, they must adapt to the experience of being a minority for the first time and confronting discrimination in the place where they live. Participants stressed that having similar experiences makes people want to stick together and support each other, which is why domestic and international H&L students might choose to stay within their own subgroups.

Another important finding that emerged from participants’ responses was the effect of language barriers. Four of the eight participants referenced this theme. Some participants who were raised in the United States did not feel comfortable speaking Spanish. In some instances, participants described socializing with an international H&L student and not feeling comfortable speaking in Spanish, which caused them to retreat from the conversation and not attempt to socialize again.

Discussion

Participants in this study emphasized that systemic differences exist between the domestic and international subcultures of the H&L student population at their university and that these differences have a negative impact on both subgroups. Students reported experiencing discrimination by the institution, other non-minority students, and even other H&L students. They described feelings of discomfort when speaking their language on campus and feeling as though other students did not respect their cultural expressions. Finally, they identified a persistent division between domestic and international H&L students, a division engendered as an unspoken norm by older generations of students.

Students reported that the institution lacked the resources necessary for them to practice their culture comfortably on campus. They believed this lack of resources hindered H&L students from meeting and interacting with one another. In addition to identifying their desire for a comfortable space in which to socialize, they also expressed a need for more education about minority populations on campus.

The findings also indicated that students perceived fundamental differences in socioeconomic status between domestic and international H&L students. They reported that these differences often prevented students from interacting and discovering similarities with one another. Many identified a need for more scholarships for both domestic and international Hispanics/Latinos in order to attract a larger minority population.

Limitations

The results of this study should be considered alongside its limitations. Participants were selected from a small pool of H&L students attending a medium-sized private liberal arts university in the southeastern United States. The problems they discussed reflect the dynamics of one particular institution—dynamics that might not be present at others, and particularly at those with larger populations of H&L students. Another limitation is that because of the snowball sampling method (participants were recommended by other participants), the students who were interviewed might hold similar views, and other views may not be represented. Despite these limitations, the results showed clear patterns of concerns shared by H&L students.

Conclusion

Participants recommended a number of actions the institution could take to help bridge the gap between domestic and international H&L students. They also
stressed the importance of the actions being school-initiated but student-led. It is crucial for the institution to provide the resources necessary for students to initiate conversations and take action, but it is equally critical for the students themselves to take advantage of these resources to bridge their differences. Participants want the institution to provide a comfortable space where all H&L students can socialize, but it is necessary that the students utilize any such space and make it as inclusive as possible.

Participants also identified the need to improve the climate of El Centro, a campus resource that was created to help students learn Spanish but that is used by certain international students as a social space. Thorough investigation into how to improve the climate of this campus resource would help to create a more inclusive environment. Moreover, while the participants acknowledge that some resources exist to teach students about diversity, they believe their peers need more education about the experiences of diverse populations on campus.

The students who described a social gap created by students’ differing socioeconomic status believed that more scholarships should be available to students with financial need. They argued that the H&L student population on campus would increase as a result, leading to more social interaction and greater integration within the community. Not only did participants want the university to recruit more H&L students, but they also expressed a desire for greater H&L representation among faculty, staff, and administrators. Participants noted the importance of having mentors on campus and expressed a hope that the institution would hire more H&L personnel to help guide students.

These suggestions would not only help bridge the gap between domestic and international H&L students, but they might also improve the institution’s retention of these students from underrepresented populations. It is important for all students to feel comfortable if they are to persevere until graduation. Nevertheless, it may also be beneficial for the institution to recognize that these two groups are different. Although they share a common language and some customs, there are significant differences between these two subcultures. Students in this diverse group value the differences between them and the manner in which the two sub-
groups self-identify. The institution must acknowledge these distinctions and provide the resources necessary to establish an inclusive and comfortable environment for all.

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About the Authors

Claudia Rodriguez is a senior psychology major and criminal justice minor at Elon University. Her research studies focus on Hispanic/Latino student interactions and deepening cultural experiences in global engagement programs. In addition to conducting research with the Office of the Registrar, she works as a campus tour guide and diversity ambassador, serves as an Elon 101 TA, and contributes to numerous student clubs. She was also selected to be an executive intern for the Office of the Provost for Inclusive Community, where she works closely with administration to enhance university websites and improve inclusion efforts across campus. Rodriguez is from Puerto Rico but currently lives in Elon, North Carolina. She hopes to pursue a master’s degree in higher education after graduation.

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Many mentoring conversations—especially those that pertain to junior faculty of color—cite concern about the socio-racial location of the mentor. This essay, an autoethnographic reflection by an academic of color, is a call to consider the characteristics of mentoring that have moved faculty successfully through their institutional benchmarks. The article is intended to start a discourse around how the consideration of socio-racial location in the mentor, as a measure of compatibility with the mentee, might be a misguided standard in faculty mentoring.

My colleague sat in my office in tears. This was not the first time a colleague would come to my office feeling frustrated, angry, and overwhelmed by her relationship with her “mentor.” I always try to offer comfort and little counsel, as this response to mentoring relationships is familiar to me. I have also struggled with them mightily. My relationships with the people I thought best suited to mentor me have often turned into the most disappointing relationships I have had. “The best mentors I have had have been white men,” my colleague lamented, and it resonated with me. First, I thought, “Oh, my, me, too,” and then I thought, “Well, that is just horrible.”

I found myself pulled into a brutal cycle of self-talk in which I questioned my own expectations, bias, and racializations. Why couldn’t white men be great mentors for academics of color? Why should such a thought make my colleague and myself despondent? If white men are mentoring us, who is absent or failing at mentoring us? Where are the mentors who are women of color, African American women, women like ME? Shouldn’t they be mentoring us? Finally, as my self-talk turned particularly deprecating, I realized that I was mostly angry with myself, as I, too, might have been a miserable, terrible, unbelievably bad mentor to other women of color.

Two narratives immediately revealed themselves to me:

◆ The first is of a mentor—the president of my last institution—who had a significant impact on me. I realized early in my career that my ultimate goal was a college presidency. When I shared this with my president, he said, “Well, that is amazing. I will do anything I can do to get you there.” I remember feeling embarrassed and a bit egotistical. The moment had gotten away from me. After I blurted out my dream, I quickly excused myself from the room. I tried not to think about what felt like an immature overstep. About two weeks later, the president’s administrative assistant called to set up bi-weekly one-on-one meetings to discuss my pathway to a presidency. An e-mail confirming the meetings followed, and attached were readings in preparation for our first meeting. My president had impressed me in many ways, but that first mentoring meeting was beyond expectation.

The president went over the readings, talked about his journey in a meaningful and authentic way, told me what his greatest pitfalls were, told me about his best moments, and most interesting if not most im-
important, he told me about his mentors. Over the next year we continued to meet bi-weekly. Right before I left for the on-campus interview for my current job, the president of my college called me, prepped me, talked me through questions he was sure I would encounter, and assured me I was ready and the right candidate for the position.

My campus president gave me a strong recommendation. I was very proud of that, as I appreciated that such a recommendation was not a privilege most college employees would enjoy. But I had earned that recommendation, not only as a good employee, but also as a good mentee. As I write now and reflect on my sense of myself as a future mentor, I remember the president saying, “Many people have been very kind to me, and I just want to do the same for you.”

◆ The second narrative focuses on an assistant director I supervised. When we interviewed her, she told me about her previous hardships, such as working for an African American female supervisor who “refused to mentor me.” I hired this person for all the wrong reasons, including the compulsion to right the wrongs of my unknown counterpart and be the perfect African American female supervisor. That failed. Actually, it more than failed, as the assistant director eventually left the institution at my request.

“The best mentors I have had have been white men.” As that sentence continued to reverberate, it summoned memories of the worst mentors I have had. Let me put my reflection in context: I have had many good mentors of all sorts. However, I have never had a mentor who shared all aspects of my identity exactly. If I start charting the identities of those who have mentored me well, I start to see a surprising pattern: None of my mentors has been “just like me” or even just like one another. My mentors have shared some characteristics: They saw me and understood who I was; they had a clear vision of where I was going at that time and believed I could get there; they were competent and non-competitive with me; and they were kind. And none of these characteristics was predicated on their socio-racial location.

If socio-racial location is not the predictor of good mentoring, then these questions emerge:
What does that say about the ways in which we select, invite, pair, and educate mentors?
What is the right set of expectations that should and/or could be set for mentors and mentees?
Is there a way to set outcomes for mentoring programs that are not reliant on the trappings of sameness and a singularity of lived experience as a requirement to mentor?

I now better understand some of the challenges that mentoring programs encounter: there are not enough potential mentors whose identities are sufficiently similar to their mentees'; mentor fatigue; mentee disenfranchisement; and unmet outcomes and goals. I think about this largely in the context of attracting, retaining, promoting, and the achievement of tenure by faculty of color, but I believe it speaks to mentoring programs in general as well.

Another transformative narrative dates even further back in my academic life. When I entered graduate school, I was working exclusively with white faculty. I was counseled to find black and brown faculty—preferably African American or African faculty—in order to be truly successful in my Ph.D. program. I did not question that advice; in fact, I went out of my way to develop relationships with several faculty members in a way that can only be described as particularly raced, if not racist. Their race was the only reason I sought them out. I did not share interests, scholarship, or actual lived experiences with any of these women.

I spent the first year of my program being bumped, thumped, rejected, and marginalized. Ultimately I left to find new advisors. I had no mentoring. I did not learn how to navigate or negotiate higher education, my graduate school, or the institution as a whole. Instead, I learned all the ways I was not black or brown like they were. I was told that my scholarship on mixed race simply reflected my desire to not be black. I was told that my focus on the United States was the wrong lens, and thus my work was worthless. I was dumped without warning by one of my advisors in a Barnes & Noble because I simply didn’t “interest” her.

Not only did I not have a project, but I also had no sense of self. I had been raced and racialized, but I had never been seen or heard. I certainly had not been mentored. Finally, because I had to have a committee, I went back to several of the white faculty members who had guided me through my application process, and I asked them to be on my committee. I never asked them to mentor me, but they did. With no formal mentoring title, training, or program, these faculty members chose nevertheless to accompany me on my journey. I now realize that they intentionally made it their job to NOT make my journey any more difficult than a Ph.D. journey should be. Most of all—and this is what I have to offer to the mentoring conversation—they were human with me. My committee ended up White, Pakistani, lesbian, middle class, rich, from multiple disciplines, tenured, untenured, retiring, and second-year review, and these faculty were human with me. I shared no deep salient identities or histories with any of them, but they became my family. These faculty read with me, wrote with me, published with me, edited for me, and ultimately passed me. They also showed me how to be with a student, a mentee, and how to commit to their success without allowing myself to get in the way.

Since my defense, I have heard so many heartbreak ing stories about students and mentees failing to complete their Ph.D.s. I listen to their stories. I pay attention to why they chose their committee members.

For those who had a choice in whom they chose, those who are successful often say things like “People told me he was a good mentor,” “I heard their students are well prepared and knew what was expected of them,” etc.

Those who have had nightmare journeys to the professoriate tell me things like “It was academic hazing” and “I think she had a terrible experience in graduate school and thought that is how it was supposed to be.”

In both sets of narratives, no one had told me that socio-racial identity was the determining factor in the success or failure of those relationships. I am also pleasantly surprised to discover how many of the successful narrators consider their mentors and advisors friends and family for life. Having had both experiences during such a critical time in my education, I am proud to also number my mentors and advisors among my friends.

When I look back at the failed attempt to mentor the assistant director mentioned earlier, I better understand the things that set the two of us up to fail:

◆ My intentions were ill placed, focused as they were on “doing a better job” rather than fully understanding what the job was.
◆ I also had no sense whatsoever, despite my graduate school experience, that I could fail at mentoring.
Had I let go of the mentoring relationship sooner and focused only on being a supervisor, I wonder if the work relationship could have been better sustained.

The assistant director approached me with the expectation of sameness. We shared an African American identity that we performed very differently. She also expected me to be like her last supervisor, who failed. I have spent an inordinate amount of time reflecting on this entire professional experience. I own this one, for sure, and now work very hard to avoid recreating that dynamic. Instead, I strive to be an effective, intentional mentor.

I suggest that we rethink and perhaps altogether stop using the term and standard structures of “mentoring.” I am aware that this is not a new idea. Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore has directed us away from “guru” mentoring towards the “mentoring map” which would allow for a framework of mentors and not a single mentor that a person’s success might hinge on. I suggest that we capture the characteristics that individuals seeking career assistance report as helpful and sustaining and that we let go of some of the expectations and unfounded ideologies that currently shape mentoring. Here are some thoughts in that end:

First, let us appreciate that not everyone could or should mentor and that even the best mentors shouldn’t mentor all the time. Some of the stories that had me a bit confused, and of which there is evidence in my own narrative, suggest that the same person can be wildly successful with one mentoring relationship and an abysmal failure with another.

Second, it is acceptable to end a mentoring relationship (I recommend not doing it in Barnes & Noble, but that is just me) or to not take one on when you aren’t at your best. The three months around my failed mentor relationship with my assistant director were wrought with stress and crisis. My father died, I finished my Ph.D., and I separated from my husband who then died. This did not make for a solid, grounded, and emotionally flexible mentor, which is what I believe every mentee deserves.

Third, assumptions of sameness must be examined, deconstructed, and done away with. Not only should we not assume that we need someone who is “like us,” nor should we assume on the basis of socio-racial identity that they are “like us.” I offer an alternative viewpoint: that we should not seek out and desire sameness in a mentor. That is what friends are for.

Some of the best advice and direction I have ever received has come from those whom I didn’t care for in the beginning, because we seemed so different at the critical points of socio-racial identity. But it is also from them that I learned how to talk about very important pieces of my mentor identity and performance: bias, privilege, dominance, agenda, and singularity of focus. These mentors taught me about self-examination, self-reflection, and holding myself accountable for how I have an impact on others.

I have had many mentors who were people of color and who had other marginalized identities, as well as those who had majority and dominant identities; all gave me permission to learn. They stretched my ability to see beyond myself. My experiences—admittedly a singular source of experience with those who were “just like me”—often became a relationship of competition and conformity. At the end of the day, sameness is nothing more than an assumption. My inability or unwillingness to perform different parts of my identity in a particular way drew great criticism and often led to further marginalization.

The mentoring that worked best in my immediate context suggests that mentoring is a relationship; like any intentional relationship, it must come from an organic place. The best mentoring relationships grow from proximity and mutual need and evolve over time.

Toward the abandonment of mentoring as a term, expectation, practice, and ideological standard, I think the conversation we might want to have in higher education is how to be in community with one another without invoking the power relations and dominance that often attend “mentoring.” I have people in my life who have helped shape me and who have led me in many ways. I call them family, not mentors. These people, who were rich with far more knowledge and experience than I, have all done one thing that I think is the most important, regardless of what one might call this relationship. They all—including the president of my former institution and my Ph.D. committee members—have talked about what they learned from me. I have learned from every mentor/mentee relationship I have had, whether structured or unstructured, from both sides of that investment. The best mentors were honest and transparent, allowing me to learn from their successes and
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failures. Many were quiet, observant, responsive agents who knew whether to step in or support. One of my favorite relationships with a direct supervisor taught me that mentoring can occur with few words. He would often say, “Do what you think is best,” which made me a tiny bit annoyed. When I left his supervision, I asked him why he had always told me that. He said something to the effect that he had never had a sense that I needed him to tell me what to do, just that I needed to be reassured that I knew and could do what was best. That supervisor never called himself a mentor. He believed that we had a reciprocal relationship and that we gave and took as needed. Now that we no longer work together (but still talk things through with each other), I better understand that relationship and how those of us who wish to mentor might be better mentors.

I close from the vantage point of my current job: I am one year in as an associate dean of academic affairs, which ten years ago I never anticipated being. Writing this article has been an amazing way to revisit and pay a bit of homage to those who have directly and indirectly helped get me here, mentoring me across time and throughout my journey. It is also the perfect way to view where I am now. I was much more aware when I arrived here of who was stepping up to build that reciprocal relationship with me and who was invested in my learning, growth, and development. I am excited to say that one of those is my direct supervisor and the other is my peer associate dean. In both of these relationships there is a particularly circular, reciprocal mentoring energy and behavior. We support and learn from each other. I am responsible for faculty development and have a teaching mentoring program—a mentoring program for first-year faculty—as part of that responsibility. I will be thinking very carefully with my team about how to make sure our new faculty are the beneficiaries of reciprocal, intentional, and human relationships that help them advance as faculty and as people.

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About the Author

Noelle Chaddock, Ph.D., is Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for Diversity and Inclusivity at Rhodes College. Working with faculty around issues of equity and inclusion in and outside the classroom is a welcome challenge for Dr. Chaddock. Through eight years in the SUNY system culminating in a two-year stint as the SUNY Cortland Chief Diversity Officer, Chaddock contributed to the system-wide cultivation of inclusive leadership. She spent three years as Chair of the University Faculty Senate Committee on Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity and also served on the Chancellor’s Diversity Task Force and the first annual SUNY System Diversity Conference planning committee. Dr. Chaddock has presented to and provided diversity training for the University Faculty Senate, SUNY EFS, SUNY Morrisville, Stonybrook University, Purchase College, and community partners in the public and private sectors, including the Binghamton Police Department. Dr. Chaddock received her doctorate in philosophy from Binghamton University and focuses her scholarship on and through critical race and critical mixed race frameworks and theory.
Wine and Whine: A Case Study on Mentoring Support for Women in Higher Education Administration

By Wendy A. Paterson and Nancy A. Chicola

Wining

We met in the middle—halfway between her chair and my deanship. Actually, it was in a restaurant in Batavia, midway between Buffalo and Rochester, New York. There were only a few restaurants in town, but it didn’t really matter which one we picked as long as the two of us could find a nice merlot and some decent cuisine to supplement the hours of talking that we had literally “bottled up” between Nancy’s new job as chair and mine as dean.

I had made the momentous choice to step away from 21 years at Buffalo State College to “move up” to a deanship at a smaller private college with a relatively new school of education. Having lived for most of my 50+ years in one locale and having devoted my professional career to one college, the offer to accept the deanship hurtled me into a leadership role for which I was well prepared by experience and talent but that I never could have guessed would have the emotional and spiritual impact that would send me into three years of soul searching and self-doubt. A fierce feminist and accomplished leader who had held various roles in higher education, I had already navigated the troubled waters of a mostly male profession. But I was truly unprepared for the feelings of alienation and even hostility I would encounter as a “colonist” in this “foreign place.” Not only was this a new job, but it also required that I locate a new home where I would stay during the week with only my faithful golden retriever for company and companionship. I would be completely apart from my significant other, my circle of friends, and all of my family. To hedge my bets, I rented a house and commuted on the weekends back to familiar old Buffalo. I was not at all prepared for the strange feelings that greeted me every day. For the first time in my professional career, I was an outsider in an entrenched, paternalistic college culture. I found little support from other college officers in a strange maelstrom of “trust and not trust” from the faculty I would lead.

At the same time, I found, to my delight, that I could continue a close friendship with Nancy, my former colleague who was now facing the “deer in the headlights” phenomenon of becoming chair of my former department. When I had become chair six years prior to leaving for the deanship’s position, I couldn’t believe that sixteen years and many different roles at the same college hadn’t actually prepared me for the exigencies of “being chair.” Nancy was a world traveler, already highly accomplished in administration, having led our educational leadership major and having logged years as a principal and associate superintendent. Yet even in the same place and space we had shared for six years, Nancy was in for a perilous first season as chair.

As the merlot worked its magic and we both relaxed, we shared “Can you believe?” and “What an ass!” and “How did you…?” The conversation was so freely expressive, so extemporaneous, so authentic, and so cathartic that we resolved to do it again at least once a month. We would help each other through the challenges of our new positions by meeting regularly to
share our stories, give voice to pent-up anger, let tears flow, and give substance to strategies that might grow from our two minds rather than each of us relying on just one. We enjoyed both a good wine with dinner and a good whine about our lives and our many challenges as women leaders in higher education.

As two women negotiating difficult times in new leadership roles, we were in the unique position of having shared a context, of having constructed the same department together, and—we learned to our joy—of having kindred spirits. Nancy was struggling to assert her leadership and juggle the thousand tasks that maintain the momentum of a large and complex department. She often found herself at odds with her dean, who was just one of a series of deans who landed like planes awaiting transfers and who was using this college as a stepping stone to the “next” more prestigious position (he soon left to become a provost). He didn’t know his faculty and didn’t care to spend much time getting to know them. Nancy felt like a salmon swimming against a strong current of disrespect and disdain.

Meanwhile, I struggled to assert my leadership skills under the domination of a provost who called me to his office weekly as if I were a child being summoned to the principal’s office for bad behavior. I fought nausea and tears every time we met. Most of the meetings turned out pretty much as I expected: I was shamed for uncomplimentary things “someone had overheard me say” or denigrated for decisions I had made for the good of my school but that he perceived as expensive, naïve, and unnecessary. Having fashioned my self-image as a positive person with boundless energy and lots to offer the college, I learned from him that I was a “yeah-but-er” and chronically resistant. I began to wonder if I was really cut out for the job.

At each month’s “Wine and Whine,” Nancy and I brought new problems to our table. While many of them remained insurmountable even after dinner, we looked forward to our “therapy sessions,” treasured tethers to the happier and more satisfying world we had constructed together as friends, as co-workers, as women inhabiting what for many years was the male-dominated and -created world of higher education.

A New Model for Mentoring

Nancy and I had “accidentally” developed an informal yet powerful way for us to connect, debrief, decon-
struct, detox, and demystify our respective new posts. We found a very natural way to connect with each other as women leaders. We did use our common experiences to problem solve collaboratively, but more important, we offered each other that ephemeral, spiritual, and emotional support that we now understand is a critical ingredient of women supporting women. Rather than a traditional mentor/protégé relationship whose function is almost entirely one-sided (i.e., the protégé benefits from the mentor), we gave each other real support as we invented ourselves anew in our respective leadership roles. We had already had lots of training and lots of formal schooling in leading organizations, yet what we really needed was each other.

We were not the only female leaders who were experiencing the stress of invading the still largely masculinized culture of higher education. I learned how truly common an experience that is for women when I attended the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Leadership Institute, a professional development program to advance the careers of women in higher education. There, I shared tales of triumph and tragedy with a group of fellow deans who laughingly named our group “The Island of Misfit Toys.” Each of us presented a profile of our unique struggles with the work of leadership. There were deep, reflective conversations…and plenty of wine!

Really Talkin’

As we considered how we might write about this new “co-equal form of mentoring,” we returned to a classic work on women’s constructivism. Women’s Ways of Knowing (Belenky et al. 1986, 1997) is a classic treatment of the social construction of meaning that women find most effective. To our delight, the authors published a tenth anniversary edition (1997). In the preface to this new edition, ten years beyond its groundbreaking influence on the education of women in the academy, the authors revealed that their approach to the astounding wisdom expressed in the book was born from exactly the same sort of informal co-construction among the authors as Nancy and I “discovered” in our “Wine and Whine” meetings.

Belenky and colleagues refer to the engendering of Women’s Ways of Knowing (WWK) as having been “conceived in a Jacuzzi in French Lick, Indiana” (1997, ix) where the women gathered each evening to share their thoughts about the experiences of women in higher education as part of their application for a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant. While the authors were focusing their research on distinctly different issues and populations, they realized through their first real talks in the Jacuzzi and at informal meetings that they “shared a common sense of missionary zeal” which Clinchy reflected was “an uncommon commodity in the academic milieu where I plied my trade” (x). Ten years post-Jacuzzi, one of the authors referred to that first meeting as “the best pajama party I’ve attended since the sixth grade!” (xii).

Goldberger recalled that she and her co-authors came by stages to unify their diverse research interests by “lolling about someone’s room—talking, talking—trying to figure out what exactly we wanted to do (or could do) together” (xi). She remembered the “aha!” moment when she and her colleagues gained a “breakthrough insight: Women don’t just learn in classrooms; they learn in relationships, by juggling life demands, by dealing with crises in families and communities” (xi). This discovery was not only the result of these remarkable women’s research on other women, but it was also a truth each discovered for herself in the process of sharing that research. The importance of those first informal talk-fests that engendered WWK was affirmed ten years later when the authors recalled, “Like a really good family, we could laugh, argue, listen, talk, eat, play, think, and feel together with the kind of comfort that only a common history and love produces” (xxiv).

Belenky et al. (1997) describe the value of that talk thus:

Constructivists make a distinction between ‘really talking’ and what they consider to be didactic talk in which the speaker’s intention is to hold forth rather than to share ideas. In didactic talk, each participant may report experience, but there is no attempt among participants to join together to arrive at some new understanding. ‘Really talking’ requires ‘careful listening’; it implies a mutually shared agreement that together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow. ‘Real talk’ reaches deep into the experience of each participant; it also draws on the analytical abilities of each. Conversation, as constructivists describe it, includes discourse and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation, and sharing (1986, 144).
Like those authors’ “pajama party,” our “Wine and Whine” sessions provided for Nancy and me exactly that kind of unbridled, familial, girlfriend-to-girlfriend honesty that no formalized mentoring or institutionally sanctioned collaboration could ever accomplish. In “really talkin’” we shared frustrations and deep personal feelings about the lack of support from male “overseers” (an intentionally cruder term than the more benign official term “supervisors”). We co-negotiated difficult solutions to problems with our pesky “human” resources; we explored structural and governance strategies; and we diffused the challenges in our personal lives by talking with an empathetic female ally who was at the same time a professional colleague and friend. In the sensory-rich setting of a local bistro, after choosing the right wine for the night’s whine, we engaged in really talkin’.

The Bigger Picture

According to An Agenda for Excellence: Creating Flexibility in Tenure-Track Faculty Careers (2005), a report issued by the American Council on Education’s (ACE) Office of Women in Higher Education, the number of women faculty in the higher ranks—especially those engaged in leadership roles—is inversely proportional to the burgeoning populations of women enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. Perhaps as a testament to more equitable hiring practices, women do outnumber men at the lecturer and instructor ranks, but they steadily lose ground to their male colleagues from the rank of associate professor upward, to a low of 26.5 percent at the rank of full professor (<acenet.edu> FAQ on faculty gender). This phenomenon of diminishing female persistence has been termed “the leaking pipeline.”

Critical readers of these statistics indicate that there are multiple reasons that women either lose out or choose to drop out before they attain the higher faculty ranks and thus are underrepresented in administrative posts at the dean’s level and above. One reason is inadequate mentoring; another is dissatisfaction with the “deprecating culture” of the academy. Even women who have attained tenure at the associate professor level report greater dissatisfaction and stagnation than men at the same rank. Further, women who “boldly go” into positions of leadership in faculty governance or adopt leadership roles prior to attaining full professor rank may be inordinately punished for their early willingness to lead, as was the case when I became chair and was first refused promotion to full professor. It is a sadly common observation that the volume of work at that level of governance inhibits an individual faculty member’s opportunities to do research and to publish at a rate presumed necessary for promotion to full professorship (<acenet.edu> 2005, Agenda for Excellence). I chose to take a sabbatical, write a second book, and log several new publications, so I successfully attained the full professorship while serving as chair in my second three-year term. Although Nancy wanted to advance in rank, circumstances in her personal life and new challenges at work made it impossible for her to devote her time to that goal.

In the February 19, 2016 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, the lead story was “The Uncertain Path to Full Professor.” In praise of what the authors call “the elite class of the professoriate,” the article adds that the lack of “clear-cut” criteria for advancement to that rank has proved most daunting for women and minorities. They add, “When the criteria are vague and mentorship is hard to come by, that may signal some faculty members that a promotion to the top is out of their reach” (A22); thus they make the case that good mentorship is an essential element of both the aspiration and ascension to full professorship. Often the differential message to men and women is unspoken, but it can be evident in the assumptions held by many women that they are not yet ready whereas men are encouraged and supported through active advocacy on their behalf.

The 2005 ACE report further warns that women and people of color most often express feelings of alienation, hostile climate, low job satisfaction, and failure to become fully engaged in the academy. “Consequently, relatively few become department chairs or assume other university leadership positions” (13). The report encourages college and university presidents to “reconceptualize” their ideal worker in academia by acknowledging the human factors that motivate women and persons of color to advance their careers by contributing to various goals of the professoriate in ways that have meaning for them. One specific recommendation to support such a change is that faculty “should be able to readily find colleagues in and out of the institution with whom they can work collaboratively, from whom they receive guidance, and in whom they can trust to develop and maintain respectful collegial relations and interactions” (25). Thus, the birth—and successful
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launch—of a new concept of women helping women: “Wine and whine!”

And now?

Nancy has retired, and I have returned to Buffalo State as dean of the School of Education. While I am definitely in a friendly and more comfortable place for me, personally, I still face each new day’s challenges to my resilience and endurance with hope and trepidation. Nancy and I regularly schedule “Wine and Whine” sessions for there are always new realities for each of us to bring to the table. Most recently, Nancy suffered the loss of her beloved husband shortly before her retirement. I am currently embroiled in the continuous challenges of declining enrollments in teacher education. Through co-construction and “really talking,” we continue to share our experiences and construct success strategies.

I have expanded the concept to include more “really talking” for my entire dean’s suite, which is gloriously all female. In our “Sweet Suites” meetings, we share our work agendas, but the conversation always turns to family; the laughter flows freely; the mutual interdependence is understood and appreciated. We find ourselves spending more than the hour we schedule together, yet we are invigorated and affirmed; we do more than just “share our duties,” and we are more than just a “work team.”

Sponsorship, mentorship, and advocacy are all recommended in literature on women advancing through the ranks into leadership roles in education and business. Yet we remind readers that there is a personal dimension for any planned course of action to boldly bring what is characteristically feminine into the higher education workplace. Pay attention to the development of the woman, herself, through co-construction, shared problem solving, and an empathic connection that is not part of a formal mentor’s responsibilities. We urge women leaders to do that for themselves while they nurture—not just mentor—other women. We strive not only to be equal to men but also to assert the unique values and experiences that make us exactly who we are.

References


About the Authors

Wendy Paterson, Ph.D., is Dean of the School of Education at Buffalo State College. She spent 21 years there as a developmental and educational technology specialist, faculty member, and chair before accepting the deanship at St. John Fisher College in 2009 and then returning to Buffalo State in 2012. Her Ph.D. in elementary education is from the University at Buffalo (UB), where she was named 2005 Distinguished Alumna of the Graduate School of Education. Paterson has enjoyed diverse experiences in her teaching career, including teaching reading in elementary and high school, providing services to students with disabilities, and teaching literacy, educational computing, and elementary education at Buffalo State. In 1997, SUNY honored Paterson with the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Service. She has published two books on divorce and single parenting, one on mothers entitled Unbroken Homes: Single Parent Mothers Tell Their Stories (2003), and a second book on fathers entitled The Forgotten Parent: Divorced Dads on Parenting through and beyond Divorce (2010). She is an internationally recognized researcher and scholar with an eclectic list of publications and presentations that represent her many interests in instructional technology, literacy, single parenting, and women’s issues.

Nancy Chicola, Ph.D., is former Chair of the Elementary Education and Reading Department and recently retired from her role as Director of the educational leadership programs at SUNY Buffalo State. She has been a teacher and educational leader for almost 50 years, serving as a classroom teacher, special education teacher and consultant, staff developer, and university professor. She facilitated the initiation of the International Professional Development School model in Zambia, Chile, Italy, and Dominican Republic. She mentored teacher candidates in Chile and co-led teacher candidates to Zambia. Her research has focused on culturally responsive teaching, social studies methods education, and educational leadership studies. She has written two books, Creating Caring Communities with Books Kids Love and Discovering World Geography with Books Kids Love as well as numerous relevant articles. She received her M.S.Ed. in special education from Northeastern Illinois University and her Ph.D. in Administration, Supervision, and Curriculum Development from the University of Colorado.
A best practice regarding annual employee performance evaluations is that there should be no surprises. Issues regarding a person’s performance should be addressed as they occur throughout the year. This has been my approach when evaluating staff performance. However, this practice did not prepare me to manage my surprise when a staff member shared something very unexpectedly at the end of her evaluation: She considers me her mentor.

Maybe it is better to describe the moment as one of shock rather than surprise as I had no indication that she perceived me in this way. She had not given any indication that she was interested in a mentoring relationship, even though, over the last few years, I had been working to develop her understanding of the role of the registrar’s office given that she was new to higher education. I had never used the word “mentor” to describe our interactions, even though that was their nature. I invested a significant amount of time in helping her understand how her position’s responsibilities fit both within the registrar’s office and within the university community as a whole. We had discussed the historical role of the registrar and how registrar’s offices are organized on other college and university campuses, and we had reviewed how office responsibilities could be similar or different compared to those on our campus. It had been exciting to watch her passion for the profession grow as she sought to learn as much as she could about the responsibilities of a registrar’s office.

I look forward to developing a mentoring relationship with this staff member and will do what I can to help her achieve her professional goals. What I did not share with her is that over the years, I have occasionally thought about what it would be like to have a formal mentor myself (it has been hard not to as the topic of mentorship seems to be ubiquitous). It is not uncommon to see LinkedIn articles discussing mentorship or to hear friends or colleagues thanking those individuals who have mentored them throughout their professional careers. These posts and public acknowledgments began to make me question why I did not have a mentor and to think about the best way to find one. I almost expected someone to swoop in and say, “Hey, I want to mentor you!” (Alas, that has not happened.) Nevertheless, my understanding of mentorship has expanded. Originally, I had thought that I needed to find someone to mentor me formally, but I began to realize that I have had the great fortune of having had many informal mentors throughout my higher education career. It is because one of these informal mentors saw potential in me more than 25 years ago that I was able to begin to see myself working in higher education.

All these years later, I am not sure how I learned about the student worker position that was open in the University of Wisconsin-Platteville’s (UWP) admissions office. I do remember that I was excited to accept the opportunity. I loved helping process the admission applications, transcripts, and other documents, and it gave me great pride to help complete the files so admission counselors could decide which applicants to accept. My role within the office expanded, and I was asked to help
with campus tours and to assist in the registrar’s office during peak registration periods. Later I served as an orientation leader. At the time, I did not appreciate the incredible opportunities that were being afforded me; nor did I realize that they would serve as the foundation of my career in higher education.

Later, when I worked in UWP’s admissions office, there was a transformative moment that remains clear to me today (even though it occurred approximately 25 years ago). Dr. Richard “Dick” Schumacher, then UWP’s Dean of Enrollment Management, walked out of his office, handed me a copy of a journal article, and told me to read it. The article, “Students as Admission Paraprofessionals—A Springboard to Admissions Careers,” by Carla Shere and Susan Cassel, is from the Journal of College Admission; I have held on to it all of these years.

Although the journal article was my first formal introduction to the field of admissions and to consideration of the field as a viable career path, it was not my last opportunity as an undergraduate student. I attended several college fairs with one of UWP’s admissions counselors and remember my disbelief when I was left alone at the table. I recall feeling ill-prepared to answer questions from prospective students and their family members without the assistance of the admissions counselor. I soon realized, however, that I knew the answers to the questions the prospective students and their family members were asking. My confidence increased as the few minutes I had been left alone stretched to 20 minutes. Although it was a gamble leaving me at the table to represent UWP, the reality was that this was a life-altering event that made me want to pursue employment as an admissions counselor.

I am grateful to Dick Schumacher. Without Dick’s decisions to share the journal article with me, to allow me to accompany the admissions counselor, or to talk to me about the admissions field and my career aspirations, I know that my life would not have taken the path it did. Yet Dick’s influence on the start of my professional career did not dawn on me until recently. Dick was my first mentor even though I would not have given him that label that at the time. It is possible that he recognized the situation for what it was, but if he did, he never labeled our interactions as mentoring.

From Leader to Mentor

In 2013–14, after serving the Illinois Association for Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (IACRAO) in several other leadership roles, I had the distinct honor to be elected president. During my term, I had the opportunity to reflect on those individuals like Dick Schumacher who helped propel my professional career. I also had the opportunity to think about IACRAO’s next generation of leaders. It is an interesting moment when you realize that you are no longer new to the profession and that your many years of experience have moved you into the role of a more seasoned leader.

As with other state and regional organizations, IACRAO has many talented people on its membership roll. However, many years of decreased funding for higher education in Illinois has made it more difficult for individuals to consider leadership positions in IACRAO. At many Illinois colleges and universities, the registrar and admissions offices have taken on more responsibilities—typically with fewer resources. Financial constraints and staffing levels make it difficult for supervisors to approve employees’ requests for time away from the office to attend board meetings, workshops, and conferences. What is happening in Illinois is not unique; these issues are occurring in other states and regions as well. Knowing these realities and the need to develop new leaders for IACRAO, I began to consider what could be done to prepare individuals for leadership roles within the organization. I contemplated how I could encourage individuals to consider taking on leadership roles, and I looked to my own professional trajectory and involvement in IACRAO as well as the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) for ideas.

Although my formal leadership roles within IACRAO ended when my term as past president concluded, I remain invested in the organization and in doing what is necessary for it to continue to thrive. (Frankly, I am too young and too committed to IACRAO and the profession to not find ways to stay involved.) Taking the ideas that I began to formulate while I served as president, I decided that even if formal mentoring opportunities were not available in IACRAO, nothing would stop me from informally mentoring IACRAO members. I have the opportunity to encourage those I meet and to urge them forward in their professional journeys—as Dick Schum-
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updates and receive invitation-only information.
acher did for me. I believe that those of us who have served in leadership roles in a state/regional organization or within AACRAO are able to see our professional organizations from a broader perspective, and we know what it takes to balance our work and personal lives with a volunteer position within a professional organization.

I have taken a variety of approaches to informally mentoring those who either have expressed interest in moving up within IACRAO or who may not yet have realized their potential for leadership. Personally reaching out to a person can give him the extra confidence to become more involved with or to take on a leadership role within the organization. I make it clear that I am supporting them and that I will do what I can to help them attain their professional goals. This is important because people have often seen things in me before I saw them in myself. Were it not for those people, I am not sure my professional trajectory would have included becoming president of my state organization or getting involved in AACRAO. Certainly there are others who, like me, could use that confidence boost from someone who is getting to know them and who encourages them to become involved. The president or other leader of a state/regional organization or AACRAO sends a powerful message when he or she encourages an individual to take a position within the organization.

Lately, I spend time getting to know new attendees at conferences and catching up with members who have shown an interest in becoming more involved. It is especially exciting to get to know new members: I love hearing how they decided to enter the admissions or registrar field; hearing their enthusiasm for learning about their position, their college/university, the profession, and the organizations that exist to support their growth. Between conferences, I devote time to regularly following up—via e-mail, phone calls, etc.—with those members I have met so I can learn how things are going for them. It gives me the opportunity to check in and to gently encourage them to strive to meet their professional goals. In addition, I have committed to thanking members for jobs well done so they know their time, effort, and dedication to IACRAO have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. I vary my approach to informal mentoring interactions, but the goal is always the same: to help people realize their potential. Mentoring is not a short-term initiative, so there has to be a commitment to remaining actively involved in another’s professional journey.

Those of us who have served in leadership roles within the state/regional organizations are poised to informally mentor those who are new or “up and coming” in the admissions and registrar professions. We are friendly, helpful, and willing to share our knowledge and time. Often, we work in higher education because we love the environment, and we love seeing students learn and grow. It thus stands to reason that many of us are good at informally mentoring our ‘students’ within our state and regional organizations: We are good at supporting and teaching them as they learn about the admissions and registrar professions and ultimately assume local or national leadership roles.

About the Author

Daniel Weber is the University Registrar at Northeastern Illinois University where he has served since 2011. He has worked in various admissions and registrar positions at several Illinois colleges and universities over the past 23 years. He also served as president of the Illinois Association for Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (IACRAO) in 2013–14. He earned his M.S.Ed. from Eastern Illinois University and his B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.
Two Thousand Shy People in One Place

By Ann Liska

I’ve noticed in all my years in AACRAO that most registrars are shy. Like I am.

Shy people can be good speakers, managers, and mentors. All it takes is a small comfort zone, which we can easily create. My experience moving to a foreign country in my late 50s may be extreme, but it’s certainly not unique. Shy people can be at home anywhere in the world, because we tend to function independently. We keep our own counsel. We draw strength from practices that are independent of place, such as meditation, prayer, journaling, and music. We create our own community of like-minded people, and those people become our surrogate families.

Shy people are resilient and thoughtful. We are good writers. Many of us started as teachers in classrooms where our shyness stared us in the face (we thought we’d left that trait behind so many times). When we started university, we thought we’d left our high school persona behind; we thought the same when we broke up with our first college beau, when we parted ways with the roommates we’d been assigned but could not live with, when we married and discovered that marriage could be just as isolating as singleness, when we were widowed early or got divorced after swearing eternal love, when we breathed a sigh of relief at conventions upon returning to our private hotel rooms, and when we finally boarded the plane and thought “thank God that’s over…until next year.”

Because so many of us are shy, the minority of extrovert registrars tend to stand out. You know who you are: you organize the regional get-togethers, and you reply to every listserv message. We shy ones are mostly lurkers, venturing a reply or perhaps even a question only once in a while. We are happy to have the listserv though, especially for the inevitable ‘what do other schools do’ queries that come to us from the management.

Technology in general is a boon to the shy registrar. An e-mail is so much less intimidating than face-to-face meetings, which themselves are preferable to telephone calls. I can confess now that I hate talking on the telephone (I always have—even as a teenager, when I pretended to love it).

When I started in AACRAO, there were no mobile phones, no tablets, no Internet. At conventions, many of us would studiously avoid eye contact by pretending to be engrossed in our conference programs. We read books, wrote in our journals, and/or went to the nearest hotel bar. We might have left the convention center to go…anywhere, provided it meant we didn’t have to engage in conversation. We might have wandered the exhibit hall yet not talked to a single vendor. We might have avoided the quizzes and raffles, even when there was a big prize.

Now, thank goodness, we have the technology to respectfully ignore one another. Instead of rereading the conference program or trying to write something profound, we can scrutinize our phones or tablets, pretending to check in with “the office” while actually watching videos of cats. Trust me: “The office” does not want you to “check in.” If you’re a good manager (and you prob-
ably are), they are doing just fine without you. Here are my practical tips for introverted managers:

1. **Be resilient.** Resilience is a quality worth cultivating, whether you stay in higher education or move to a different profession. I taught school for five years before starting all over again in a registrar’s office. When I say I started all over, I mean that I was not trusted to answer the telephone. It took me years to build trust with my boss. It was difficult for both of us, but eventually we had a very good relationship.

   Change is inevitable, so being prepared for it and greeting each new challenge positively will make all the difference between an imposed change that you dread and one that you can embrace.

2. **Grow your knowledge.** Early in my career, I saw technology as increasingly important to our profession. Rather than studying for a master’s in music education, my first career, I went back to school and earned an associate degree in information technology. Later, I earned an M.S. in information systems, which led to a promotion and eventually to working abroad. Education is never wasted. I’ve been able to use my music education degree in other ways, and music is more enjoyable for me now that it’s not my “job.”

3. **Be patient.** (See 1 and 2, above.)

4. **Get a mentor, be a mentor.** Mentorship is extremely important. I’ve been fortunate to have had excellent advisors and also to have been able to pass along knowledge to several young professionals in our field. Potential mentors will almost always be willing to help if you ask them to. The same is true of new professionals who are eager to learn from you.

5. **Build your team/network.** You don’t have to be the boss to begin building your team. Seek out the people with whom you want to work, and start cultivating those relationships now. Maybe you will eventually work together, and maybe you won’t; either way, they’ll become part of your network.

6. **Take a risk.** It is true that taking a risk can energize your career and improve your leadership skills. I moved to Abu Dhabi at age 58. I had never traveled abroad and didn’t even have a passport. That was seven years ago. I moved here for a very good job, and eventually I got an even better one.

   You can take a risk without taking drastic measures. Volunteer with your regional AACRAO. Write an article, or run for an office. Submit an idea for the next national conference. Poster sessions and panel discussions are good ways to get started.

   In all likelihood, this is my last professional job. My role now is to teach the young Emiratis who will succeed me. I can give them basic knowledge about record keeping, student rights, and student privacy. I can cite AACRAO standards and teach them how to recognize a fraudulent document. I can counsel them on how to empathize with students and maintain a professional distance.

   I can’t teach them how not to be shy. They will have to find their own way around that, like I did, and like you did.

   Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a date with my cell phone.

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**About the Author**

Ann Liska has worked in higher ed administration at both public and private universities. Since 2009, she has lived and worked in Abu Dhabi, UAE. She is also a published writer, a singer and a violinist.
In the midst of a sea of accountability concerns in U.S. higher education in the last decade, states have revived discussions of performance-based funding that would allocate instruction dollars on the basis of performance metrics such as course and degree completion. This is a seismic shift from the previously common model of enrollment-based funding. Performance-based funding has presented a particular challenge to open access universities. For the purposes of this article, open access universities are defined as bachelor’s degree–granting institutions that do not restrict admission on the basis of ACT/SAT scores, high school grade point average, and the like. Typically, the mission of an open access university is to provide all students with the opportunity to pursue a degree. The access mission, however, often requires the provision to students of focused support such as developmental coursework and college readiness counseling.

The mission of open access institutions is challenging. It becomes even more challenging when performance-based funding is introduced. Performance-based funding rewards improved student success measures such as retention and graduation rates, not necessarily the authenticity of student support. Authentic student support services are support initiatives that target students’ holistic development and academic success as the primary goals. Performance-based funding shifts the focus from student support to a numbers game of beating the formula. In order to maximize allocations under the performance-based funding model, open access universities have turned to various methods to improve metrics—for example, decreasing time to degree completion, increasing admission standards, and recruiting higher-performing students. All of these are arguably in conflict with the mission upon which open access institutions are founded.

Consequently, the focus shifts away from increasing student success through authentic support such as summer bridge programs, developmental support programs, and tutoring. Maximizing performance-based funding formula allocations, however, does not have to exclude authentic support to at-risk students. This article contends that open access universities do not have to abandon their mission in order to achieve desirable funding results. By adopting methods that offer authentic student support, open access universities can maximize performance-based funding formula allocations while remaining true to their mission.

An Open Access University at the Confluence of Change

Leading the performance-based funding zeitgeist, Ohio introduced one of the boldest such models in the United States in 2012. Ohio’s funding model is now based entirely on completion metrics. The move to
performance-based funding presented a unique challenge to open access universities in the state. The model applies a systematically calculated (and arguably marginal) adjustment for course and degree services provided to at-risk students (Ohio Board of Regents 2015).

A particularly interesting open access institution facing the unique challenges of a performance-funding model is Shawnee State University, a four-year public institution in Appalachian Ohio. Shawnee State University was strategically placed to serve the underserved population of southern Ohio (Shawnee State University n.d.), where 23 percent of the population lives below the poverty level and the median household income is $35,379, compared to 16 percent of the population below the poverty level and a median household income of $48,308 in Ohio overall (United States Census 2014). Providing underserved populations with access to higher education is central to Shawnee State University’s existence.

Shawnee State University has a high concentration of first-generation, at-risk, and low-income students. With an average graduation rate of approximately 22 percent, Shawnee State University’s move to performance-based funding—paired with decreased supplement allowances to support access—was particularly daunting (Mathuews 2015). Ongoing fear of the potential loss of funds was systematically ingrained in the day-to-day operations of Shawnee State University. Such fear shifts the focus from authentic student support to improving performance metrics and survival.

In addition to funding pressures, Shawnee State University also faced pressure from the state government to improve performance measures. In response, the university set goals to improve course and degree completion rates and added commitments to increase access and post-graduation employment opportunities. The plan sought to improve student support by establishing a “Success Curriculum” for first-year students who were not college ready. The Success Curriculum includes targeted advising and supplemental support programs focusing on study and life skills. Plans to decrease time to degree were supported by increasing the threshold for defining a full-time course load and a commitment to provide new flexible degree options.
University of Regents 2012, Shawnee State University n.d.). This plan demonstrates the tension between maintaining authentic student support and creating strategies for maximizing funding.

In addition to the concerns described above, Shawnee State University reported enrollment decreases of 1.8 percent during the fall 2014 semester and an additional 8.3 percent in the fall 2015 semester. These decreases represented an estimated loss of at least $1.5 million in tuition revenue. The university attributed the decreases to changing demographics and the implementation of new admission criteria. During the fall 2014 semester—and for the first time in its history—Shawnee State University enforced a requirement that incoming freshmen have an ACT score on record before they could be offered admission (Pratt 2015). Operating under the assumption that those students who had not taken the initiative to take the ACT also may not have had the ambition to complete a college degree, the ACT enrollment requirement was intended to build a high-performing student body that would generate increased course and degree completions for the institution.

In an effort to overcome the aforementioned challenges, Shawnee State University has taken steps to improve its authentic student support. The university has implemented new scheduling software and has created two new academic advisor positions to focus exclusively on direct student support. As described previously, Shawnee State University implemented the Success Curriculum, which includes regular mentoring and advising along with seminars to help improve students’ study and life skills. The university’s initial responses to the challenges prompted by performance-based funding demonstrate a commitment to authentic student support. These initiatives come at a price, however, as new positions and increased services carry personnel and operating costs. Under the performance-based funding formula, no financial support is given to implement strategies intended help the institution meet the challenge of improved metrics.

Shawnee State University’s strategy to tighten admissions standards, however, hints at an approach that is detrimental to its access mission. Using ACT scores to gauge the likelihood of degree completion and as a means to exclude student enrollment does not support the authentic open access mission, particularly when driven by desires to improve metrics. Open access universities do not have to abandon their mission in order to maximize funding formula allocations. The following section provides examples of how open access institutions, like Shawnee State University, may provide authentic student support under the scrutiny of performance-based funding. While not necessarily focused on funding formula challenges, these examples present possible strategies for institutions seeking to balance student support and fiscal accountability in the current higher education climate.

### Affordable, Focused Remediation

Open access universities should consider alternative remedial education models that increase students’ likelihood of completing college-level coursework. The CUNY Start program is challenging traditional remediation models with an innovative approach of lower-cost remediation with delayed enrollment. Instead of paying the usual tuition of $2,400, students pay only $75 for one semester and take only remedial courses, saving their financial aid for credit-bearing courses after they officially enroll at CUNY. CUNY Start enables students to benefit from remedial courses at a cost that is not prohibitive. Students are spared the pitfalls of depleting their financial aid awards and acquiring student debt prematurely, both challenges to at-risk students, and can focus instead on improving their college readiness (Fertig 2015).

Open access universities should also look to additional models and initiatives at the community college level and implement best practices in support of continuing access and student success. One such initiative is The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Completion by Design program which, over a five-year period, increases the graduation rates of low-income students under the age of 26 (Completion n.d.). One of the implementation strategies of the Ohio cadre of Completion by Design schools is to help students become college ready more quickly and in an authentic way. Completion by Design schools are encouraged to collaborate with their local high schools so that college placement exams are administered during students’ junior year (Completion by Design n.d.). This enables students to benefit from developmental education during their senior year in high school so they can enroll in college-level coursework immediately upon graduation. Like the CUNY Start model, the enrollment of high school seniors in developmental education at no cost to the students would be cost saving compared to traditional remediation models.
Conclusion

Rather than viewing the access mission as an impediment to maximizing performance-based funding allocations, open access universities should view their mission as a means to bolster student success metrics through authentic student support. Accountability and authentic student support need not be mutually exclusive. As open access institutions rise to meet the challenges of the completion agenda, they can achieve financial success and, most important, authentic student success—the hallmark of the access mission.

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Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Mapping Curricula to Enhance Student Success

By Rodney Parks, Jesse Parrish, and Blake Whitesell

The Forest

For today’s registrar, disentangling the institutional curriculum can be a daunting task. The complex and interconnected learning that higher education institutions now strive for is highly desirable among millennial students, but even the most articulate curricula sometimes fail to represent it clearly. The advent of shared governance, the blending of various high-impact co-curricular practices, the continued growth of interdisciplinary programs, and an increasingly muddled mixture of prerequisites and co-requisites can make it challenging for faculty to see the “big picture” of their own programs. The confusion often results in loopholes, hidden variables, and curricular ambiguity at a time when students and institutions are trying mightily to craft feasible four-year graduation plans. Whether navigating the registration system, the academic catalog, or program “check sheets,” students are required to mine disparate sources to extract the course information necessary to build a viable degree plan.

In 2014, the Office of the Registrar at Elon University sought to create a tool to help academic departments identify administrative barriers to student success. The project was inspired by students themselves: During registration, they frequently express frustration with a range of requirements and rules concerning course attributes—qualities assigned to courses that dictate their curricular applicability. For example, a history course might have the “civilization” and “art history elective” course attributes, which indicate that it satisfies the general education requirement category of civilization and also counts towards the art history minor. Beyond these attributes (of which there are more than 200), complex prerequisite and co-requisite parameters, ambiguous course track sequences, and term-specific course availability are among the issues students cited most frequently. Program and course information is maintained in several locations and sometimes seemed unnecessarily complex.

Further complicating the situation is the element of choice. Students often are given the flexibility to select from a set of courses to satisfy a particular requirement, yet the consequences of their choices vary. Sometimes the choice is inconsequential, as when neither option yields a more advantageous result. Consider, for example, Art History 112, 113, and 114: Each of these courses has no prerequisites, carries the “expression” course attribute, and fulfills a specific art history A.B. requirement. In other words, the courses are thematically different but functionally equal. Other choices, however, are deceptively significant. Both Math 116 (Applied Calculus) and Math 151 (Calculus I) satisfy fundamental math requirements for many majors, but Math 151 is a prerequisite for many more mid- and upper-level courses. Students who discover the difference after completing Math 116 are occasionally disad-
vantaged and sometimes must take Math 151 as well. Choices like this one often have a greater impact on undecided students or students who change their major, as their academic goals change after they’ve already taken several steps toward attainment of another.

On paper, this looked like a wicked problem. How could the abundant attributes, pre- and co-requisites, sequences, and term-driven parameters of a degree program ever be reconciled into a more intelligible plan, let alone one that accommodates for student choice? Each of these sets of information was scattered across the academic catalog, major check sheets, and various websites, making the assembly of an academic plan more difficult than necessary. All of the information was there, but without a map it was difficult to visualize how it fit together. It was only when the problem was defined in this way—as “difficult to visualize”—that a potential solution surfaced: What if a visual curricular map were created for each degree program? Following the steps of the design thinking process, this problem definition was succeeded by ideation. Various members of the office began to generate different versions of the visual and to explore their advantages. The look and feel would go through many changes, but it was clear that this visualization of curricula could help demystify the issues at play.
The Path

By chance, a junior student in an entrepreneurship class had come upon the same problem. Thanks to the early appointment of an advisor in his major, this student had avoided the struggles of the curriculum. But the rest of his project group had not been so lucky. They discussed their different experiences regarding majors, classes, and registration and agreed that the problem was sufficiently prevalent to deserve a solution. In considering the linearity of the academic catalog and major check sheets, the group also began to explore the idea of a visual map. The course professor (who was also the junior student’s advisor) recognized the potential for partnership and connected him with the Office of the Registrar. He was quickly added to the design team and began to help refine its perspective of the problem and identify potential solutions.

With a workable plan to develop a visual curriculum, the design team turned to prototyping. The student began by using the course catalog and a diagramming tool to create a visual master list of all classes offered at the institution that also indicated course sequences developed according to pre- and co-requisite rules. This method allowed for the representation of the applicability of each course not just within a single major but universally. Classes with no prerequisites were identified first; then the courses for which they were prerequisites were attached with a line to indicate the relationship. Multivariate course relationships were denoted with color coding (see Figure 1).

The master list was helpful, but at more than 500 pages, it was far too lengthy to be useful—especially to students. Using the master map as an anchor, the student began to carefully parse the master list into major-specific maps, effectively reengineering the major check sheets for clarity and efficiency. The result was a flow chart for each major that showed recommended course selections, the ideal sequence in which they should be taken, their requisite interconnectivity, and other course attributes, all over the span of the ideal four years of enrollment to degree completion. Even though the flow charts lacked grid overlays to delineate years and terms, their structure and sequence were readily apparent to the first students to view them (see Figure 2, on page 52).

This new translation of program requirements not only was more intelligible than the previous written list of requirements, but it also consolidated information about courses and course sequences using subtle and varied indicators such as color and lines. The entirety of a major program could be viewed at a glance, and rules and sequences could be identified without referencing other information. Importantly, these major maps also highlighted curricular choke points in anecdotally unforgiving major programs of study. In majors like special education, the curricular maps clearly emphasized those courses that presented the most significant scheduling and registration challenges (see Figure 3, on page 53).

At a glance, the structure of some programs appeared exceedingly complex. Some courses, like EDU 311 and 312 in this example, had three qualifying attributes,
multiple pre- and co-requisites, and a narrow window of availability. It seemed as though only students with consistently perfect term schedules, no withdrawals, and a considerable amount of luck could align their requirements so they could graduate within four years.

Lessons
A preliminary presentation of the visuals was met with positive feedback. Other students and faculty members found the major maps to be a refreshing and elucidating explication of major requirements and a useful complement to the major check sheets and academic catalog. The student worker scheduled interviews with students in each academic program to learn more about their personal experiences. Specifically, he wanted to determine whether the course bottlenecks that were evident in the maps occurred in practice. Anecdotal evidence about each curriculum’s strengths and weaknesses substantiated feedback collected throughout registration phases. Further research and cross-references verified students’ laments: The catalog listed obsolete courses; departments revised the chronology of course offerings without providing advance notice; and some co-requisites were not offered at all.

Together, the student worker and the registrar then met with each department chair to discuss their findings. The dialogue was intentionally unstructured but focused on how faculty could use the curricular maps to improve their department’s programs by restructuring course sequences, expanding course offerings, or reevaluating pre- and co-requisites. Particularly complicated programs were few in number, but most department chairs agreed that the visualizations were elucidating, and they committed to using them to inform conversations with their faculty. As a result, dozens of minor modifications were proposed and approved by departmental faculty, with the result that curricular paths were streamlined, and common barriers to success were eliminated.
The design team had ongoing discussions about feedback that was collected from student and faculty interviews. Its members decided to take the maps one step further and create a four-year planning tool that could prove useful for students as well as their advisors. The tool would be used as a reference point to help all students design a cohesive graduation plan that would balance and sequence program requirements across their four years of study. The design team developed the idea of using a drag-and-drop interface for selecting courses, and the student began writing code to enforce the rules identified earlier in design. The newest iteration of the curricular maps more clearly defines each year and term of study and offers a cleaner presentation without lines indicating course connectivity (see Figure 4, on page 54).

Users can populate cells representing each term of study with courses from the recommended list. They can also rearrange those courses in different terms, and the system will notify them of any errors (for example, if a course placement violates program or course rules). This increases the flexibility of the tool without sacrificing its clarity, utility, or reliability. The design team tested it with larger groups of students in the spring, with the goal of improving the planning experience for all.

As curator of the curriculum, the registrar must be able to discern its nuances and interpret programmatic requirements for students in all disciplines. Facilitating an equitable and accessible student experience can be challenging, and the right tools are vital to making meaningful changes on campus. The visual curricular maps have illuminated issues that Elon students long bemoaned but that the institution never properly identified or resolved. Equipped with a new perspective and informed by the voices of students, Elon’s registrar has sparked a collective conversation about curricular requirements that may fundamentally change the way the university’s students plan, learn, and graduate.
### About the Authors

**Rodney Parks** is University Registrar at Elon University and Assistant to the Provost at Elon University, where he has served since 2013. Dr. Parks also serves as Assistant Professor of Human Service Studies. Parks earned his Ph.D. in Counseling from the University of Georgia in 2011 and has published numerous studies focused on unique populations and their challenges in navigating institutional curricula.

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**Blake Whitesell** is a former undergraduate Research Assistant in the Office of the Registrar at Elon University. In May of 2017, Whitesell graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in Entrepreneurship, and now works for an educational technology company.

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#### Figure 4.
Curricular Map, Interactive Four-Year Planner Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTH 116 or 111</td>
<td>ACC 212</td>
<td>MKT 323</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>MGT 423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>BUS 326</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>ENT 355</td>
</tr>
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<td>CIS 211</td>
<td>ECO 203</td>
<td>FIN 343</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>MKT 412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC 201</td>
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<td>FREE</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>ENT 490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO 111</td>
<td>BUS 202</td>
<td>BUS 465</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1ST YR MATH</td>
<td>ECO 301</td>
<td>BUS 381</td>
<td>FREE</td>
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<td>ENG 110</td>
<td>FREE</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENT 250</td>
<td>ENT 340</td>
<td>ENT 460</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No Prerequisite
- Fills a Core Requirement
- Senior Stand. Required
- Unnecessary for Major
- Can Be Co-Requisites
- Junior Stand. Required
- See Options
- No Prerequisite
- Fills a Core Requirement
- Senior Stand. Required
- Unnecessary for Major
- Can Be Co-Requisites
- Junior Stand. Required
- See Options

---

**Figure 4.**
Curricular Map, Interactive Four-Year Planner Design

- No Prerequisite
- Fills a Core Requirement
- Senior Stand. Required
- Unnecessary for Major
- Can Be Co-Requisites
- Junior Stand. Required
- See Options
Butts, Hearts, or Dreams: What Do You See in Your Classrooms?

By Christopher Tremblay

Butts in Seats

“Butts in seats” is a common phrase in the field of enrollment management. It refers to maximizing enrollment in course sections for the best return on investment. Enrollment managers seek to ensure that students are taking as many credits as possible toward their on-time graduation and so they have a positive impact on retention and graduation rates. Deans want to avoid canceling under-enrolled courses. The chief financial officer wants to generate as much tuition revenue as possible. As colleges and universities seek to optimize their net tuition revenue, they are carefully scrutinizing “butts in seats” by monitoring each and every “butt.” Even the type of “butt” may matter: is it an out-of-state or international student generating comparatively more revenue? Not all “butts” are the same in the eyes of some college administrators. Never before has there been so much pressure and emphasis on accountability—especially from federal and state governments—regarding the efficient delivery of college courses. Right or for wrong, “butts in seats” equates students with dollar signs.

Hearts in Seats

There is another way in which to think about butts in seats. At a recent conference, the alternative was “hearts in seats.” This was a nice shift from thinking about students as numbers to thinking about them as humans. “Hearts in seats” is very much a student affairs perspective—one that reminds of the compassion and purpose that enter every classroom. Students use their education to fulfill their mission in life. Their hearts yearn to be connected and to have a positive experience with others in their classes—including classmates as well as the faculty member. Student retention guru Vincent Tinto reminds of the importance of engaging students’ hearts (Simonet 2008). Even an online course can engage the hearts in seats. To do so requires different techniques, but I have witnessed and experienced talented faculty effectively engaging their students’ hearts. According to Dr. Rollin McCraty, HeartMath’s director of research, “They’ve discovered the heart as ‘an organ of perception and intelligence’” (Crowley 2012). In other words, the heart works in concert with the brain. The heart is also a placeholder of positivity. Leadership blogger Dan Blockwell (2014) said, “The essence of heart is courage to connect on a human level” (n.p.). As educators, we are called to connect the humans in our classrooms to knowledge. A first step is to recognize the hearts that enter each and every classroom.

Dreams in Seats

But “hearts in seats” still is not enough. So I created “dreams in seats.” After all, in every heart and with every butt is a set of dreams waiting to be fulfilled. As
educators, the greatest gift we can offer our students in and out of the classroom is to inspire them to pursue their dreams. Every student has dreams, and it is our responsibility to nurture them. But that requires that we know those dreams, which means knowing our students. Students deserve to be asked about their dreams. Their dreams might be simple or complex, in any shape and size. They may need to be teased out. Because if we never ask, we will never know. Reconceptualizing our students as dreams should motivate us to maximize the number of students in our classes. Ultimately, dreams can lead to students’ achievement of success.

So the next time you think about filling a class with more students in order to maximize tuition revenue, think about students not as filling seats but as human hearts full of dreams. Fill every course with dreams.

References


About the Author

Christopher Tremblay is Director of AACRAO’s Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) and also serves as a Research and Marketing Consultant for the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program at Michigan State University.
Dual Enrollment from Two Points of View: Higher Education and K–12

By Wendy Kilgore and Ellen Wagner

While dual enrollment fills a similar student success niche in both higher and K–12 education, the administrative perspectives of these two entities do not always align. This article highlights the groups’ similarities and differences in perspective and proposes implications for practice.

Impetus for the Projects

Student participation in dual enrollment in the United States increased approximately 75 percent from 2002 to 2011, from approximately 1.16 to 2.04 million students (Marken, Gray and Lewis 2013; Waits, Setzer and Lewis 2005). While dual enrollment had previously been intended for gifted and advanced students, it expanded to include a wider range of students. During the last decade, policy makers and school officials have collaborated to increase access to dual enrollment, in part to extend federal and state initiatives for improving college readiness for high school students. The introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) laid the foundation for greater access to accelerated learning programs, including dual enrollment and a proliferation of articulation agreements between postsecondary institutions and local school districts (Glancy et al. 2014, SHEEO 2016).

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) database on dual enrollment practices notes that 47 states plus the District of Columbia have common statewide dual enrollment (DE) policies with guidelines for access, qualifications, funding, and related issues (Zinth 2015). Of these, ten states require “all public high schools and eligible public postsecondary institutions to provide DE,” and 28 states plus the District of Columbia “allow nonpublic, proprietary, or tribal colleges or approved workforce training providers to participate in dual enrollment programs.” Three states—New York, New Hampshire, and Alaska—leave dual enrollment policies up to local districts and postsecondary institutions.

Further, dual enrollment has been found by many to provide students with a wide range of potential benefits (Bailey and Karp 2003; Barnett and Kim 2014; Cassidy, Keating and Young 2011; Karp 2012; Webb and Mayka 2011), including:

✦ Helping prepare students for the academic rigors of college;
✦ Providing information to students about the skills they will need to succeed in college;
✦ Improving students’ motivation by offering interesting courses and high expectations;
✦ Promoting relationships between colleges and high schools;
✦ Providing a college course experience to populations traditionally underserved by higher education;
✦ Contributing to a college-going culture in the school district;
✦ Providing an accelerated pathway to a college degree;
✦ Enabling students to become accustomed to the college environment (when the DE course is offered on the college campus);
Increasing the likelihood that high school students will graduate from high school and enroll in college;

Increasing the rigor of career and technical programs and thereby better preparing students for the workforce; and

Building college awareness among students who typically would not consider enrolling in college.

Many school administrators have looked to dual enrollment to help bridge the gap between academic preparedness and postsecondary expectations. Dual enrollment has been shown to reduce the likelihood of students’ needing to enroll in remedial courses in college, which can increase the amount of time it takes to attain a degree and thereby increase the likelihood that students will drop or stop out (Attewell et al. 2006). Research conducted by Berger et al. (2013) and Reisberg (1998) suggests that students who earn college credits while they are still in high school may earn their college degrees far sooner than typical students. Wyatt, Patterson, and Di Giacomo (2014) also found that dual credit courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses can have a positive impact on students’ future success. The authors concluded that students who received higher AP and IB examination scores were more likely to earn a degree from a two- or four-year institution.

These factors—increased popularity/enrollment, improved college-bound success and access, the college completion agenda, pathways for increased student motivation and engagement, and dual enrollment as a potential tool for universities and colleges to meet enrollment goals—are the reasons that AACRAO, AASA, and Hobsons decided to pursue similar lines of research of the topic.

**Convergent and Divergent Perspectives on Dual Enrollment**

As stated above, similar questions about the benefits of dual enrollment were asked of higher education (HEd) and K–12 administrators. While the questions were not identical, they were similar enough in design and content to provide a basis for comparing perspectives. Most K–12 districts and HEd institutions offer at least one form of dual enrollment (95 percent and 78 percent, respectively) (see Figure 1). The differences in the reported percentages of where dual enrollment courses are offered, specifically on the K–12 versus the
HEd campus, may be attributable to the fact that often, more than one K–12 district is associated with a specific higher education institution. The differences in reported delivery method percentages decrease when online and blended course offerings are considered.

In Figure 2, the original survey HEd rating categories of “strongly agree” and “agree” are combined into one rating to compare with the singular-response K–12 survey design. The same methodology was applied to the K–12 response for the statement “Evidence a student is college ready.” This made it apparent that K–12 and HEd respondents agreed that the greatest values of dual enrollment are improved access to college courses, improved affordability of college courses, and improved access to expanded curriculum (Figure 2). They had comparable opinions as to whether participation in dual enrollment leads to an increased likelihood of acceptance to college. The two groups were most divergent in their opinions about improved career options as an outcome of dual enrollment participation (49 percent HEd vs. 72 percent K–12) and that successful completion of dual enrollment is evidence that a student is college ready (76 percent HEd vs. 52 percent K–12). The latter is somewhat surprising; one would anticipate that the results would be just the opposite—that higher education institutions would be less likely to believe that participation in dual enrollment correlates with college readiness.

K–12 respondents were also able to select “other” as a choice and to provide further comment about other benefits of dual enrollment. Comments included:

- “They demonstrate that college is achievable.”
- “It’s great for first-generation students.”
- “[It] helps underrepresented groups see they are capable of doing college work.”
- “It’s a confidence builder, knowing that a student can pass a college class.”
- “They can get their associate’s degree in high school.”
- “Pique interest of ‘at-risk’ students, enhance experience of advanced students.”

There is considerably less convergence between the K–12 and HEd perspectives on the obstacles to offering dual enrollment than there is regarding the benefits of dual enrollment (see Figure 3, on page 60). Most striking is the perceived barrier of a lack of credentialed instructors. More than half of K–12 respondents noted that this was a significant barrier whereas only 5 percent of HEd respondents were of that opinion. The HEd sur-
urvey included “our institutional culture” as a potential barrier to offering dual enrollment and in fact was the most commonly selected barrier by HEd respondents. The K–12 survey did not list this barrier, so it is not included in Figure 3. Nevertheless, it is included in the list of the top three barriers for each sector (see Table 1). “Cost of books/course resources to the student/family” was an obstacle specified in the K–12 but not the HEd survey and was rated the number four barrier to offering dual enrollment.

Slightly fewer than one in five K–12 respondents and almost three in ten HEd respondents selected “other” barriers. Comments by K–12 respondents defining “other” barriers include:

- “Difficulty of transferring credit.”
- “Difficulties in sharing information between schools and colleges.”
- “Lack of interest from higher education institutions.”
- ”Lack of scheduling alignment between schools and colleges.”
- “Lack of interest from students and parents.”
- “Lack of transportation for students.”
- “Paperwork nightmare.”

“Other” barriers described by HEd respondents included a perceived lack of preparation by high school students for courses that might be offered, lack of staff to administer the program, not fitting into the institution’s mission, believing that community colleges were already filling the niche, and, finally, constraints imposed by the institution’s current accreditation.

Notwithstanding these potential barriers, administrators, foundations, and legislators continue to develop initiatives to improve the access, funding, and quality of dual enrollment programs. For example, to help address the lack of credentialed instructors, states

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**Table 1. Top Three Barriers to Dual Enrollment by Respondent Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEd</th>
<th>K–12</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional culture</td>
<td>Lack of credentialed instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other barriers</td>
<td>Cost to the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to higher education institution</td>
<td>Cost to the school district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and organizations are developing grants in order to save instructors money while they earn their qualifications (Horn et al. 2016). Such programs include credit voucher systems, professional development funds, and loan forgiveness in order to qualify instructors for dual enrollment instruction. Additional initiatives focus on developing funding mechanisms and incentives for schools. In 2016, several states—including Tennessee, Maryland, Illinois, and Florida—enacted such legislation (Education Commission of the States 2016).

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

An article in Education Week asked “are dual-enrollment programs overpromising?” The author articulates the concern that students who earn credits through these programs face challenges in transferring those credits (Gerwertz 2016). She further notes that “very little research has been done on the proportion of students’ dual enrollment credits that are accepted by the colleges they attend.” While the latter statement is true for research based on student-level data, the present study on institutional practices and policies does not support the idea that a large percentage—or even a fair percentage—of students who earn credits through dual enrollment have difficulty transferring them to another institution. Although the AACRAO study found that private institutions are less likely than public institutions to accept dual enrollment credit for transfer, 86 percent of institutions in the sample overall accept this credit with few restrictions. These results, paired with the fact that in 2014 more than three-quarters of the more than 17 million college-going students in the United States attended a public institution, make it even less likely that dual enrollment credit transfer is an issue affecting a large percentage of students. Nevertheless, implications for practice for both K–12 and HEd can be gleaned from each study individually and through the collective lens presented in this article.

- K–12 advisors should also be able to articulate directly to students the advantages and limitations of dual enrollment, particularly with regard to certain courses. The importance of college and career counseling was underscored in discussions about course planning, colleges likely to accept dual credits, articulation agreements, and the like.
- The AACRAO study noted that a small percentage of HEd institutions are reluctant to accept credit earned through dual enrollment because they do not accept credits that also count toward a high school equivalency. This can be true even when the learning outcomes of the course are equivalent and the credentials of the faculty teaching the high school course meet or exceed the minimum credential requirements for an instructor teaching the same course on the HEd campus. This situation is most likely to occur when the dual enrollment credits were earned at a lower-division-only institution and the student is attempting to transfer the credit to a comprehensive institution. A comparable standard of perceived double dipping does not appear to apply when lower-division-only courses are earned in the process of completing an associate’s degree. Perhaps this double standard could be a point of discussion when articulation agreements between lower-division-only institutions and their comprehensive institution partners are reviewed.
- Given the difference between K–12 and HEd’s perceived barrier of access to credentialed instructors, there may be an opportunity for HEd to offer more instructor credentialing program options to its K–12 partners.
- Costs to both institutional parties and the student/family were among the most commonly noted barriers to dual enrollment. There may be an opportunity for HEd to become more creative (within the bounds of existing legislation) to reduce costs to institutions and students/families.

Notwithstanding the existence of some barriers to dual enrollment for both HEd and K–12, there is agreement that students who participate in dual enrollment derive many benefits. Consequently, dual enrollment is and likely will continue to be an important strategy for K–12 and HEd institutions to expand opportunities for student success.
References


About the Author

**Wendy Kilgore** serves as Director of Research and Senior Consultant for AACRAO and has more than nineteen years of experience as a higher education administrator, researcher, and consultant in the United States and Canada.

**Ellen Wagner** is Vice President of Research with Hobsons. She is a former professor and academic affairs administrator who brings more than 20 years of experience as a researcher and analyst in commercial educational software settings.

**Author’s Note:** In summer 2016, AACRAO, in partnership with Hobsons, completed a research project on dual enrollment in the context of strategic enrollment management at U.S. institutions. This project made it clear that dual enrollment plays a significant role in strategic enrollment management at more than half of the higher education (HEd) institutions that responded to the survey. Hobsons and the American Association of School Administrators (K–12) (AASA) completed a similar study in early 2016 that looked at the current state of dual enrollment in the United States from the perspective of school district leaders. In this group, the majority also agreed that dual enrollment is “reflected in my district’s strategic plan.” AACRAO and AASA respondents were asked similar questions on the respective survey instruments. This content overlap provided an opportunity to consider dual enrollment from the perspectives of the two principal stakeholders. This article includes data and background information from these two reports in order to make comparisons and provide implications for practice.
The Impact of Advisor Outreach on Priority Registration

By Jennifer L. McClure

In 2015, Elgin Community College’s Student Success Infrastructure used the book *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change (2013)* by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler to help frame conversations about improving student success. One of the book’s main concepts is using data to identify and leverage key behaviors leading to desired outcomes. To this end, the Institutional Research Office has begun using regression analysis to identify key behaviors and characteristics that have an impact on student retention. The current project builds on this work and contributes to the general higher education literature by assessing the impact of additional personal contact/outreach on early registration.

Problem

Elgin Community College (ECC) offers priority registration to all currently enrolled students for a one-week period prior to open registration, yet only approximately 25 percent of ECC students take advantage of this opportunity. The goal was to see if an increase in priority enrollments could be effected during this period.

Intervention

The intervention was to determine if academic advisor outreach has a positive impact on students’ registering during the priority registration time period. Data were disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and program of study to determine if there is evidence for differential impact of additional outreach by each subgroup.

Determining the Participants

The college used enrollment, demographic, and program data pertaining to currently enrolled students in spring 2016 and affective data from an instrument used in its college success course to determine which groups of students historically have been least likely to take advantage of priority registration. One hundred (100) students were randomly selected to receive the intervention. Of the more than 4,000 students remaining, another 100 were randomly selected for inclusion in the comparison group.

The enrollment behaviors of fall 2014 and fall 2015 students were assessed and used to categorize students into two groups of registrants: those least likely to enroll during the priority registration period and those most likely to enroll during this period. Demographic data were used to predict which students would be least likely to enroll during the priority registration period later in the semester. Previous analyses indicated that returning African American students typically delayed registering for the following semester longer than other student groups. Program of study data were used as well because anecdotally, a majority of early registrants are enrolled in health profession programs. Finally, data from the Learning and Student Skills Inventory (LASSI) (which assesses will, skill, and self-regulation...
for learning) were used to determine which scales, if any, have a significant association with registration during the priority period.

Table 1 shows the pre-intervention predicted probability of enrolling during priority registration week. The table compares the demographic characteristics of the intervention group with those of a random stratified sample from the control group. The experimental group is very similar to the random sample from the control group on all demographic factors. This suggests that any differences in registration rates are due to the contact by the advisor and another factor.

### Applying the Intervention

The intervention included having the twelve academic advisors reach out to a randomly selected portion of the subgroup of current students who match the criteria of those students who had the lowest likelihood of enrolling during the priority registration period in fall 2014 and fall 2015. Advisors were to have e-mail or telephone conversations regarding continued registration and to influence the students to take action during the one-week (April 11–17, 2016) priority registration period for summer/fall 2016. Phone calls and e-mails were to be made individually without the assistance of autodial.

### Results

Outcomes for those students who received the academic advising call differed from those for students who did not.

The data indicate that contact by advisors had little impact on the preregistration behavior of those students who were predicted to be most likely to enroll during the priority registration period (37 percent vs. 36 percent). However, when the timeline is expanded by two months past the priority registration period, students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Registration Intervention Group</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contacted by Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowest Quartile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>50 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>27 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-Tech</td>
<td>9 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>40 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received Financial Aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took LASSI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Terms at ECC</td>
<td>2.3 4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from this subgroup who were contacted by the advisors before the priority registration period actually enrolled at a much higher rate (71 percent vs. 52 percent) than did those who had not been contacted by advisors.

The impact is the opposite for those students predicted to be least likely to enroll during the priority registration period: They were significantly more likely to enroll during the priority registration period. Students who were contacted by e-mail and phone call were more likely to enroll during the priority registration week. Students who were contacted by e-mail or phone before the priority registration period actually enrolled at approximately the same rates as the control group. The sample size is too small to allow for reliable conclude regarding the impact of advisor contact on priority registration rates. The data show that students who were contacted by e-mail or phone were more likely to enroll during the priority registration period than did those who had not been contacted by advisors.

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small to make any meaningful comparisons by including high or low probability in this analysis. It is also impossible to say whether the number of contacts is important or whether this particular combination of e-mails and phone calls is significant, but it does appear that just one contact alone does not have much of an impact.

Table 2. Comparison of Proportion of Students Who Registered During Priority Registration Week by Intervention Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration Period</th>
<th>Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week</th>
<th>Priority Registration Intervention Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contacted by Advisor</td>
<td>Not Contacted by Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Priority Registration Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Quartile</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Quartile*</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime During First Two Months of Registration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Quartile*</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Quartile</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: The proportion of students represented in the green cell in a row is significantly higher than the proportion of students represented by the red cell in the same row.

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Conclusion

The data clearly show that students who were contacted by an advisor enrolled at a higher rate than those who were not contacted. The students who received an e-mail and phone call also registered at a higher rate than those students who received only one contact. The results also show that the impact of being contacted by an advisor extends two months beyond the priority registration week. Additional research with larger sample sizes is needed to determine if the type of contact makes any difference.

Table 3. Comparison of Proportion of Students Who Registered During Priority Registration Week by Intervention Group and Type of Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration Period</th>
<th>Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week</th>
<th>Priority Registration Intervention Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contacted by Advisor</td>
<td>Not Contacted by Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-MAIL AND PHONE CALL</td>
<td>E-MAIL OR PHONE CALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Priority Registration Week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anytime During First Two Months of Registration</td>
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</table>

* Note: The proportion of students represented in the green cell in a row is significantly higher than the proportion of students represented by the red cells in the same row.

About the Authors

Jennifer L. McClure, Ph.D., has more than 20 years of higher education experience in public two-year and four-year private for-profit and non-profit institutions with leadership experience in organizational development, team building, facilitation, project implementation, interest based and modified traditional bargaining, and developing high functioning teams with an emphasis on process improvement. Her focus has been in registrar, admissions, and enrollment management functions. She is the managing director of enrollment services at Elgin Community College overseeing admissions, registration and records, testing services, and the first stop center. Her focus has been to create a superior customer service experience for students and empower staff to make decisions. Working collaboratively with financial aid and student accounts, Dr. McClure emphasizes opportunities for cross-departmental training for front line staff. She began working at ECC in 2006 as the registrar. She has varied experience leading college efforts related to branding, administrative policy, and student success initiatives through Achieving the Dream. McClure earned her Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement from AACRAO in 2016.

Prior to ECC, Dr. McClure worked for nine years for DeVry Inc., the past five years of which she served as the director of licensing and government relations working with state boards of higher education to add additional locations and new programs. She is also a trained Systems Portfolio Appraiser and Team Chair for the AQIP accreditation process through The Higher Learning Commission. Dr. McClure earned a doctorate in Higher Education from Loyola University Chicago in 2006 and a bachelor’s degree in Journalism and Master of Science in Education from the University of Kansas. She served as the Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers’ (IACRAO) treasurer from 2011–2013 and President-Elect, President, and Past President 2015–2017.

McClure would like to acknowledge David Rudden, Managing Director of Institutional Research at Elgin Community College, who assisted with the charts and analysis for this article.
AACRAO’s Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) is designed to provide a well-defined professional development program and career advancement track for enrollment service professionals. For the individual, completion of the program is a valuable addition to a resume and a formal recognition by AACRAO regarding professional readiness to conquer current and future challenges in the field. For the institution, the program will offer a better way to evaluate the preparedness of prospective employees for SEM positions.

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- Provide a one page vita or resume reflecting career experience, professional accomplishments and education.
- Hold a minimum of an earned baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

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2. **Webinars**
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   Visits to three approved institutions of distinct types followed by a written report guided by prescribed questions. In addition, *attendance at the AACRAO Annual Meeting or AACRAO SEM Conference will fulfill one of the field visit requirements.*

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   All SEM-EP candidates are expected to conduct a brief research capstone project during the course of the curriculum. The assignment focuses on tracking and analyzing a local population of students from the candidate’s institution and concludes by reporting conversion outcomes or conducting an annotated literature research project.

*Learn more at aacrao.org/SEM EP*
Campus Sexual Assault: College Women Respond

GERMAIN, L. J. 2016. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 126 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

In *Campus Sexual Assault*, Germain addresses the pervasive yet often overlooked or ignored issue of sexual violence against women on college and university campuses in the United States. The author notes that previous studies of campus sexual assault have focused primarily on the frequency of such events while disregarding one true constant: real stories, including “women’s responses to these violations and the motivations behind their actions” (ix). Germain suggests that in the absence of these stories, federal, state, and institutional policies and structures are solely “prevalence statistics and assumptions” (21).

*Campus Sexual Assault* is the culmination of a year-long project in which Germain interviewed 26 women on one college campus in the United States for the purpose of informing institutional responses to sexual violence. Germain notes that campus sexual assaults historically have “place[d] culpability for rape with the individual who has been transgressed upon” (6). In contrast, Germain’s intent with *Campus Sexual Assault* is to honor “women’s statuses as agents and owners of their stories” (16) by facilitating conversations about their actions and agency in the aftermath of sexual assault on campus.

In addition to masking the identity of the institution, Germain assigns pseudonyms to the women and their aggressors in order to ensure confidentiality. Germain also utilizes a hybrid aggregate vignette model as a way to blend two or more narratives to illustrate emergent themes from structured interviews. Details were not fabricated; rather, they were combined to further obscure the identity of each woman.

On the basis of the stories she collected, Germain identifies eight forms of post-assault agency exercised by the women in this project. Because the women’s stories tended to follow a narrative arc, she organizes the book according to the following emergent themes:
- Embodied agency
- Managed identity
- Silence
- Self-expression
- Pursuit of individually defined justice
- Transitive (formal)
- Transitive (informal)
- Empowerment

**Embodied Agency**

According to Germain, one of the most consistent elements of the women’s stories was individual acts of agency by women to protect and preserve their bodies both during and after an assault. Actions included using physical and intellectual force to survive and escape; cleansing and resting; and collecting evidence. Individuals used words like “grimy” and “dirty” to describe how they felt following an attack; consequently, cleansing their bodies was perceived as a natural response to the assault. Similarly, women described sleeping or attempting to sleep as a way “to seek privacy and comfort” (31).
These actions helped women meet their physical and emotional needs, but Germain observes that they run counter to the university’s messaging regarding the “right steps” to take after an assault. The author suggests that colleges and universities perpetuate the “perfect victim” myth of an individual who does all the “right things” to protect evidence of an attack—an individual who, despite being scared, is wholly rational throughout (26). Germain writes, “The perfect victim icon is held up as an unreasonable standard for all survivors against which they and others measure the efficacy of their actions” (38). Notably, women’s expressed need for self-care was directly at odds with the pursuit of justice.

Justice Seeking

Consistent with the literature, the vast majority of women who participated in this study did not report their assaults to campus administrators or law enforcement agencies. Many indicated that they were not confident they would be believed absent physical evidence. Germain suggests that women did not have faith in either the justice system off campus or the university’s student adjudication system. As Doyle (2015) observes, “People [e.g., university officials] treat the relationship between the accuser and the accused as a conflict that might be mediated rather than an actual attack” (37).

Few of the women in this study viewed the campus adjudication process as effective for obtaining justice. In fact, with the exception of a few selected and named individuals who supported them, the women were in nearly universal agreement that the university does not, cannot, or will not do anything about campus sexual assault (75). “Most women stated that they believed there were essentially no consequences for perpetrating campus sexual violence at the university and that the rate of perpetrators being found responsible was low or nonexistent” (76). As a result, many women worked for “restorative justice on a personal level rather than involving the institution” (81).

Managing Identity

According to the author, “Women were challenged to reconcile their experiences of campus sexual assault with their overall identities” (52). They expressed agency through two non-mutually exclusive context-driven forms: diffraction (altering the self) and homeostasis (remaining the same) (40). For some women, diffraction meant altering their physical appearance, such as cutting their hair, losing weight, and appearing unkempt in or under to either “fit in” or make themselves appear less appealing; others altered their behaviors in an effort to blend in, maintain the appearance of normalcy, or simply disappear from academic and social settings altogether.

Germain states, “Just as skipping class diffracted academic identities while preserving a sense of safety for some students, attending class despite having recently experienced trauma was a way that other students maintained homeostasis in academic identity” (42). The author notes further that for these women how others responded to them was critically important and frequently influenced decisions regarding their own sense of agency.

The choice to remain silent or to share their stories with friends and family was perceived by these women alternately as a way to maintain a state of homeostasis. Some reported that they did not want to “burden” their friends and family with information that might be difficult for them to hear; others did not want to be defined by the assault; and still others felt that the only way they could maintain equilibrium was to discuss the
assault with others. Germain surmises, “Identity and agency are interconnected when women act or decide not to act” (40).

Language and Labels
Germain states, “A common theme [of this study] was that the labels of rape and sexual assault are often difficult to say and for others to hear” (55). Women communicated three primary reasons for hesitating to apply a label to the assault: shock, general difficulty with the formal labels of sexual assault and rape, and concerns about the legitimacy of their experiences in relation to how formal labels are applied (57). Women expressed ambivalence regarding the term “victim” because of its connotations of “helplessness and powerlessness” (97). The author further notes that for many women, the language they used changed or evolved as they came to terms with what had transpired. This, she says, demonstrates the dynamic and non-linear pathways through which individuals process trauma.

The author observes that for most women, a turning point in the naming process of the assault occurred when they first disclosed the experience to a trusted person. Women most frequently reached out to their informal network of friends and family members for support and expressed appreciation for the different types of support they received, from peers asking questions to individuals simply being present and offering silent support. “This highlights not only the importance of the roles played by peers, but also the importance of active listening skills and the differences in what individuals experience as helpful and supportive” (62).

Transitive Agency
The women who participated in this project described feelings of hyper-vigilance and fear in the days, weeks, and months following attacks—feelings frequently associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For this reason, peers played an important role in accompanying women across campus and in the community and, in some cases, helping them access formal support services, such as the emergency room, student health center, or counseling services. According to Germain, “The act of reaching out to someone who functions as a bridge to a resource is an exercise of transitive agency, or agency through (or with the aid of) another source” (64).

Self-Expression
Approximately one-third of the women in this study reported using various forms of self-expression—for example, writing or other art forms—to articulate their feelings about having been sexually assaulted. Writing took the form of journaling, writing to the assailant, fictionalizing the account for a writing class, and connecting feelings to music through a blog. Many expressed a desire to take individual action, not for retribution or redress but simply to ensure that sexual assault would not happen to others. Germain notes, “Actions aimed at students’ own definitions of justice are also forms of agency that must be taken into account by policy makers, administrators, and support providers” (88).

The author describes a number of ways in which women demonstrated empowered agency following their experience of sexual assault on campus, including organizing events for the community, speaking or presenting at awareness-raising events, researching gender violence, serving in organizations aimed at supporting other students, teaching self-defense classes, and working one-on-one with peers who have also experienced sexual violence (89). In describing student motivations, Germain notes, “At the root of every interview was the participants’ intention of making things better for others by sharing their stories” (94).

Culture Shift
If college and university administrators and faculty are truly committed to addressing the issue of sexual assault on campus, they need first to dismantle the myth of the ‘perfect victim’ because it is just that—a myth. Germain writes that sexual misconduct policies

[just acknowledge the likely absence of physical evidence and thus, not be framed in a way that implies a reliance on it. As the cases brought forward at the university suggest, even with physical evidence, the crime itself often cannot be proven. This must be a significant element in conversations about sexual misconduct policies despite the challenges that it poses (102–03).]
Germain continues, “The framework of justice should restore power to people who have experienced crime, not take it away or re-victimize them” (99).

Call to Action

On the basis of this research, Germain offers a number of observations and recommendations for college and university officials to consider. Several practical examples include

- reducing ambiguity about campus services (e.g., counseling services), including providing details about wait times, waiting rooms, confidentiality, etc.;
- increasing transparency and accountability by reporting consequences of judicial processes in aggregate after a certain period of time; and
- providing more opportunities for students to learn about active listening and attending skills, particularly given the important role of friends and peer networks in supporting individuals after an attack.

Germain suggests that “significant thought needs to be put into meaningful, enforceable penalties and making those penalties known to students” (102). She also advocates for additional studies among women as well as male-identified and transgendered populations. Readers should note that Germain provides additional program and policy recommendations in the appendices.

In Summary

In Campus Sexual Assault, Germain initiates an open and honest dialogue about a topic that is frequently taboo despite its pervasiveness on college and university campuses in the United States. While the author writes from a critical perspective, she never loses a sense of empathy or purpose in sharing the stories of the women on one campus who experienced sexual assault. Vignettes are both compelling and instructive in describing an adjudication system in need of reform. Student accounts of campus sexual violence depict a multitude of women’s post-assault agency that is seldom recognized beyond formal channels of justice seeking. Stories also debunk the “stranger myth” by drawing attention to the reality that most campus rapes and sexual assaults are perpetrated by acquaintances rather than individuals who are unknown to the victim/survivor.

Germain states, “In explaining how they responded, women shift the paradigm of conversations about campus violence from prescriptive and idealistic to descriptive and truthful.” She continues, “The operative question that can drive change in the way that we think about campus sexual assault then becomes ‘what do women actually do?’ rather than ‘what should they do?’” (106). Campus Sexual Assault is an important contribution to the literature and demonstrates the critical role of scholarship in advocacy. The book should be of interest to all individuals who have a stake in improving higher education as well as the lives of all its students.

Postsecondary Play: The Role of Games and Social Media in Higher Education


Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

Postsecondary Play is a collection of essays by educational and gaming experts who explore the ways in which games and social media interface with higher education in the United States. Editors Tierney, Corwin, Fullerton, and Ragusa as well as contributing authors discuss digital technology and social media as mechanisms for tapping into the “participatory culture” of the current generation of students. They suggest that tools for engaging middle school, high school, and college students are both necessary and appropriate because current methods have proven insufficient in addressing issues of college readiness, enrollment, and persistence to graduation, especially among individuals from groups historically underrepresented in higher education. The authors state, “Our discussion on higher education and college access stems from a collective investment in educational equity and leveling the post-secondary playing field” (7).
The book is divided into three sections: In Section I, authors focus on the current landscape of postsecondary education, including national goals for college and career readiness and data reflecting current enrollment trends among the nation’s youth. In Section II, experts describe the “complex and dynamic ways in which games, social media, and play can cultivate learning” (12). And in Section III, individuals discuss evaluation strategies for games and social media in higher education as well as issues pertaining to the utility of these tools in practice. The authors note that their overall goal is to “stimulate dialogue about positive attributes of games and social media as well as highlight the dilemmas associated with digital tools” (16). Postsecondary Play is designed so it can be read in its entirety or as stand-alone sections and chapters.

Current Education Landscape

The findings of numerous studies lead Tierney to observe that in the United States, the demand for a highly educated workforce will soon outstrip the supply of qualified applicants. Despite increased enrollments at colleges and universities, retention and graduation rates have remained stagnant, and degree attainment among racial and ethnic minorities is especially bleak (25). To reverse these trends, Tierney advocates fundamental system changes rather than “changes around the edges” (19). He notes that:

- more students need to graduate from high school;
- there needs to be better alignment between the courses students take in high school and in college;
- most of those who graduate from high school need to be college ready;
- the number of students who transfer from a community college to a four-year institution needs to increase proportionally and absolutely;
- the average time to degree for students enrolled at four-year institutions needs to decrease; and
- retention at all institutions needs to increase (29).

Tierney and his fellow authors suggest that current conditions can be positively affected through the use of technologies that have already transformed other markets. According to Tierney, “An information network that provides unlimited access and resources to learn about anything cannot but shape how teaching and learning occurs in the academy” (41). He states further, “Traditional postsecondary institutions that are not able to figure out ways to utilize this new technology so that their costs go down as well…will be at risk [of not surviving]” (43).

Similarly, Perna regards games and social media as effective tools for communication as well as social and interactive methods for engaging students in learning “in ways that have not been present in traditional teaching and learning environments” (46). Perna provides a comprehensive analysis of achievement gaps and notes that blacks, Hispanics, and individuals from the lowest socioeconomic (SES) quintile face far greater challenges than their white counterparts in terms of readiness, enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Consistent with findings by Perna (2014), Conley and Seburn observe that students from groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education often lack the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of higher education, including college transition. Conley and Seburn posit that using technology with which students are familiar—e.g., social media—can help “level the playing field by enabling more high school students to do what it takes to be both eligible and ready for college” (90). Social media, games, and simulations, they argue, can provide a platform for overcoming the knowledge discrepancies between different groups in society.

Corwin contends that a “new culture of learning” has emerged which “has the potential to augment traditional forms of learning” (110). Consistent with previous research findings, Corwin notes that these new media have empowered students to become not just consumers of knowledge but also producers of knowledge—a type of “web-based knowledge commons” (Rhoads 2015, 12). In addition, interactive games and social media create conditions that may encourage college students to engage in authentic and meaningful learning experiences (Carnes 2014). In virtual worlds:

- teaching and learning occur simultaneously;
- roles shift between teacher and learner;
- collaboration and command participation are key; and
- individuals draw on nontraditional literacies to solve problems (117).

To prepare students for these learning experiences, Corwin recommends that K–12 and postsecondary
institutions cultivate both digital literacy and digital citizenship to “equip students to capitalize on digital resources and help students mediate their online interactions” (119). An increased focus on these concepts may be especially important for members of groups historically underrepresented in higher education who frequently lack access to high-quality training and education.

According to Losh (2014), “Those [students] who lack digital literacy and competence in digital rhetoric could find themselves economically and professionally disadvantaged, deprived of social capital, alienated from critical social networks, and unable to collaborate or solve problems effectively” (89). Ragusa restates the value and importance of digital literacy by examining the relationship between gender and media. She contends, “Both young men and women need tools to engage in pro-social and equity-minded behaviors online and to avoid victimization” (272).

Understanding Games

In Section II, contributing author and game designer Fullerton describes the unique aspects and benefits of games that frequently make them appeal to individuals within educational contexts, such as their potential to be self-motivating, engaging, social, and scalable. She cautions, however, that “trying to make games more like education does a service to neither” (127). Nevertheless, Fullerton identifies lessons that can be learned from what games do well that may inform the design of educational situations. For example, well-designed games invite players in, engage them in play, keep them coming back, deepen players’ understanding of the system, reward and challenge players, and frame the narrative of how they share that experience with others (128).

Fullerton acknowledges that games and social media may have the potential to influence student learning but argues that we have come dangerously close to “instrumentalizing” or commoditizing “solutions” rather than harnessing the power of games. According to Fullerton, games are successful not because they are cost effective, efficient, standardized, and scalable but because they encourage users to experiment, take risks, employ failure as a strategy, and actually play.

Similarly, Jenkins and Kahn discuss the ways in which social media are changing the nature of teaching and learning in the academy. They suggest that there is a “significant mismatch” between “learning that occurs outside of schools in recreational or professional contexts and the learning that universities recognize and reward” (148).

Connecting Games and Learning

To bridge these two worlds, Jenkins and Kahn review the literature bases of collective intelligence, transactive memory systems, and affinity spaces and outline strategies that could be introduced into large-scale undergraduate lecture classes. The authors speculate that as our culture becomes increasingly networked, educators “will need to factor these new modes of learning, new structures of knowledge, new technical affordances, and new social and cultural processes into [their] pedagogical practices” (167).

Because learning frequently occurs in multiple spaces, Gee argues, “We must look not just at the game but at both the game and any and all of its accompanying interest-driven sites. The unit of analysis [therefore] is ‘game+interest-driven site’” (176). In fact, Gee notes that interest-driven sites become passionate affinity spaces when they are well-designed and well-mentored. Affinity spaces also promote problem-solving among participants.

Gee enumerates the following properties of affinity spaces:

◆ Everyone is accepted.
◆ There is no age discrimination.
◆ Everyone is helped to achieve mastery if they want it.
◆ Everyone is allowed to mentor and be mentored by others—to learn and to teach.
◆ Everyone is expected to take a proactive stance toward learning that does not exclude asking for help so long as that help never undermines one’s proactive stance toward learning (180).

Similarly, Salen identifies strategies for creating game-like learning environments, many of which complement Gee’s characteristics of affinity spaces. She states, “Game-like challenges offer a space of possibility for learners to tinker, explore, hypothesize, and test assumptions...And they support multiple, overlapping pathways toward mastery” (200). Additionally, Salen
observes that connected learning experiences are “socially situated, challenge based, and student centered” (191).

Ellison, Wohn, and Heeter suggest that “sociable gaming”—especially games that are mediated through social network sites—can “provide the foundation for exchanges of information and social support which are important in the context of students’ psychosocial development and college success” (237). Specifically, gameplay has potential to build an individual’s social capital by creating a network of affiliates, including close ties (bonding social capital) and weaker ties (bridging social capital).

The authors state, “In the context of postsecondary success, bonding social capital is related to social support, an important predictor of student adjustment and persistence” (239). Bridging social capital, on the other hand, can facilitate knowledge transfer about the world of higher education (“college knowledge”), which may be particularly valuable to first-generation, low-income students who do not have a strong college-going culture (Almeida 2015).

Ellison, Wohn, and Heeter argue that social network games and social media offer “low threshold forms of participation that can engage broad participation” (257). Consequently, these games/tools may help students develop twenty-first century skills of “teamwork, leadership, social support provision and requests, collaborative learning, and information seeking” (249). Further, the various forms of social capital associated with these games may help students transition to college and stay connected to friends and family—important elements of student persistence.

Summary

The issues raised in Postsecondary Play are both engaging and timely as U.S. higher education has reached a liminal point at which many previously held assumptions and practices are no longer applicable or effective (McGee 2015). However, Weiland notes that traditional and new media approaches to literacy do not constitute an either/or proposition. Rather, “The social and solitary are two complementary forms of character and learning, hardly reducible to competing ‘mindsets’ or a definitive choice to be made in the competition between the old and the new” (298).

Throughout Postsecondary Play, authors express ‘learning’ in the broadest, most fluid sense of the word and thereby gain tremendous latitude in describing how games and social media or the principles of these tools could advance higher education in the United States. For example, Shute, Ventura, Kim, and Wang define learning as a “lifelong process of accessing, interpreting, and evaluating information and experiences and then transforming those into knowledge, skills, conceptualization, values, and dispositions” (218).

However, multiple authors have argued that pedagogy would improve if more faculty members adopted this broader definition of learning, regardless of the tools used (Carnes 2014, Ferrara 2015, Johansson and Felten 2014). Games and social media thus represent just one of many ways in which students can be engaged in learning at the postsecondary level. Tierney and Corwin conclude, “The challenge is to consider how to harness these bright new ideas and technologies and utilize them in a manner that enables academics to improve the teaching and learning in postsecondary education” (316).

Diploma Mills: How For-profit Colleges Stiffed Students, Taxpayers, and the American Dream

ANGULO, A. J. 2016. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 203 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

In this captivating yet deeply disconcerting book, Angulo explores the rich and often sordid history of for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) in the United States. Angulo argues that many of the issues and concerns associated with contemporary FPCUs (e.g., predatory lending, false or misleading promises of employment) can be traced to the founding of the earliest colonial colleges, when FPCUs provided alternatives to the classical curriculum. The author attributes the longevity and success of FPCUs to their adaptability and suggests that contemporary scholars and practitioners lack the historical context necessary to effectively regulate FPCUs.
For-profit colleges and universities, historically called “writing schools, merchant academies, commercial colleges, business schools, career centers, proprietary universities, technical institutes, and for-profits” (1) have largely remained in the shadows of U.S. higher education despite having served large numbers of students and receiving “sizeable subsidies paid for by U.S. taxpayers” (155). Angulo asserts that regardless of their name, one thing has remained constant: “They [FPCUs] were [all] founded to make money” (1).

Despite disdain by traditional institutions, the earliest commercial colleges not only gained a foothold in the U.S. higher education system but also shaped it. For example, unregulated for-profit schools of business, law, and medicine compelled these industries to define and standardize training and codes of conduct (21). Similarly, FPCUs served the practical needs of individuals well before the advent of trade and technical schools. However, their innovation soon became a liability.

Early 20th Century

Angulo notes that FPCUs faced three competition-related threats at the beginning of the 20th century: professionalization of disciplines, institutional diversification and specialization, and government involvement in education (30). As previously noted, increased standardization of the professions undermined the viability of FPCUs and reduced their competitive advantage.

To address the needs of emerging industries, secondary and postsecondary institutions increasingly offered specialized curricular offerings through practical, vocational, and technical education. Angulo notes that two-year institutions catered to the same student demographic as FPCUs: “those who left secondary school and wanted a postsecondary education but were uncertain about completing a four-year undergraduate course of study” (42). Further, five key legislative acts between 1917 and 1946 provided more than $150 million to the industrial and vocational education movement (45).

Ultimately, these challenges led to fierce competition among FPCUs for students and created an industry marred by “intractable problems rooted in the conflict between education and the profit motive” (48). Angulo observes that solicitors would go into public schools and prey on the ‘young and unwitting’ for a commission. Despite promises of employment, FPCUs were not obligated to fulfill these verbal contracts. Angulo describes these early 20th century FPCUs:

*For-profits had a corrosive effect on education from the elementary to the collegiate level. [They] shifted priorities from instruction to recruitment, misdirected the energy of proprietors, consumed budgets toward unproductive ends, displaced quality instruction, and mislead students or, worse, left them with empty purses and empty promises. (54)*

Mid 20th Century

While standardization and increased emphasis on professionalism in a number of fields diminished certain types of FPCUs, others quickly emerged. According to Angulo, federal dollars made available to World War II veterans through the GI Bill ushered in a new era of FPCU education focused on technical and vocational skills. Angulo notes, “During the five-year period immediately after the signing of the Servicemen’s Readjustment of 1944 [GI Bill], for-profits experienced a 300 percent increase in terms of numbers of institutions across the country” (59).

Greater demands for education and training also led to greater opportunities for fraud, abuse, and fly-by-night operations. State and federal investigations consistently documented FPCUs’ victimization of students through “poor instruction, inadequate facilities, misrepresentation of benefits to be obtained, questionable contracts, and exorbitant fees” (60).

The most egregious FPCU abuse at the time was fraud in the supply chain. Angulo reports that documented cases make it clear that it was common practice for FPCUs to create dummy corporations in which owners would buy discounted supplies from wholesalers and resell these products to FPCUs at highly inflated prices. FPCUs, in turn, would charge students (and the federal government supported by taxpayer dollars) the inflated price and pocket the difference.

Investigations also revealed graft and corruption with the Veteran’s Administration (VA), with employees accepting gifts, loans, and ownership stakes in the same proprietary schools over which they had supervisory roles. FPCU operators used aggressive marketing and advertising campaigns to specifically “attract veterans who qualified for GI Bill support” (71) and profited at the expense of servicemen and -women.
Late 20th Century

According to Angulo, legislators and policy makers anticipated that most FPCUs would fold once GI Bill funding ran out. Instead, FPCUs tapped into a vast source of federal aid through the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), which gave this sector “new life, means of expansion, and avenues for making industrial-sized profits” (85). HEA was originally intended to provide financial resources to low-income students through scholarships and work-study programs; a small portion was also used to establish guaranteed student loans (Best and Best 2014). FPCUs exploited this portion of the legislation and multiplied exponentially after Congress expanded the definition of higher education to include proprietary schools in the reauthorization of HEA in 1972.

Angulo recounts a series of high-profile scandals in the early to mid 1980s that revealed widespread abuses among FPCUs. “Well over $1 billion of federal student aid and guaranteed loans went to scandal-plagued, for-profit institutions” during this time. According to one public official, “By the time abuses were discovered, ‘the schools had come and gone, leaving a trail of debt, confused students, and false hopes in their wake’” (89).

By 1985, FPCUs accounted for more than half of all postsecondary institutions in the United States, enrolled only 5 percent of the postsecondary student population, yet consumed as much as 21 percent of federal guaranteed student loans and Pell grants. Further, “85 percent of high loan-default institutions were FPCUs, and more than 600 for-profits had a default rate greater than 50 percent” (93). A series of investigations in the mid 1980s revealed significant abuses by FPCUs, including canvassing poor and disenfranchised neighborhoods for student recruits; engaging in false and misleading advertising; targeting minors for financial aid eligibility; and setting tuition rates to the maximum allowable under federal law regardless of true program costs.

A second wave of investigations in the 1990s detailed not only fraudulent but also criminal activities. Numerous FPCUs had turned to “front-end-loaded” tuition in which students applied for the maximum student aid package to cover their entire course of study even though FPCU operators expected most of them to drop out. Angulo notes that these upfront payments “maximized returns and minimized losses in instructional expenses” (101). According to Best and Best (2014), the for-profit business model thrives on enrolling students not graduating them. Similarly, an industry insider observed, “Quality education and higher earnings are two masters. You can’t serve both” (100).

By 1990, “U.S. student loan defaults had climbed to $2.7 billion… [Investigators] concluded that at least 44 percent of this amount ($1.2 billion) came from FPCUs even though they continued to enroll only 2 percent of the overall student population” (103). Further, significant cuts to the Department of Education by the Reagan administration in the 1980s and the budget-cutting Congress of the 1990s left investigative committees with a list of recommendations for improvement but few resources to implement them. One Education Department official reported, “We are being beaten at every turn…The crooks open one school, run thousands of students through their program, close their school, and retire as millionaires before they were even scheduled for a program review” (104).

FPCUs dominated the political landscape in the mid 1990s and strategically protected themselves via campaign contributions to both parties and lobbying efforts for favorable educational policies. According to Mettler (2014), Republicans supported FPCUs because they viewed them as businesses that should be protected; Democrats saw FPCUs as points of access for low-income students. Meanwhile, FPCUs reaped enormous profits through federal financial aid even though the vast majority of students dropped out before graduating (Best and Best 2014).

FPCUs as Commoditized Investments

Angulo notes that the last two decades of the 20th century saw unprecedented growth in aggressive investments and financial instruments designed to yield short-term profits. When the dot-com bubble burst at the beginning of the 21st century, FPCUs “offered a sure thing attractive to investors [that] no other money-making opportunity could provide: income derived from federal student aid. And there was lots of it” (115). Angulo states, “During the final years of the first decade of the 21st century, FPCUs continued to receive $4.3 billion in Pell Grants and [to] process $19.6 million in federally subsidized student loans annually” (115, emphasis added).

Private equity firms were freely trading and consolidating FPCUs on the open market and thereby making
critical decisions regarding student enrollments, campus expansion, and faculty and staff quality. The author notes that all of these decisions were initiated by “fund managers under the gun to turn a handsome profit in the shortest possible time” (117). And competition for students (or at least for individuals who were eligible to receive federal financial aid) grew even more fierce.

According to Angulo, “Studies of the [FPCU] industry showed that, on average, 30 leading FPCUs spent 23 percent of their revenues on marketing and 17 percent on instruction” (120). The pressure to keep pace with the FPCUs’ unrelenting advertising campaigns had a direct impact on traditional nonprofit institutions by shifting priorities away from instructional quality and focusing instead on promotional packaging. Angulo suggests that in this way, FPCUs threatened “the core function, purpose, and mission of higher education” (121).

At the beginning of the 21st century, state and federal lawsuits were filed on behalf of students and against FPCUs’ predatory admission practices, unacceptably low completion rates, disproportional loan defaults, fabricated placement rates and reporting, and patent violations of state and federal laws (129). While these lawsuits resulted in millions of dollars in settlements and restitution, Angulo suggests that FPCUs “interpreted litigation as a fee for doing business rather than a fine, penalty, or punishment for fraud and violation of the False Claims Act” (126–27).

Summary

Angulo frames *Diploma Mills* as a cautionary tale: history tends to repeat itself when we ignore the lessons of the past. The author identifies the following four key observations from his research of FPCUs:

- **For-profits claim to do more than they can and promise more than they should.** Notably, disadvantaged students are no match against an industry that is willing to spend significant sums of money on false and misleading advertising campaigns. Angulo states, “With such vast resources, the imbalance will always leave [disadvantaged] students...vulnerable to the kinds of claims the well-educated and well-off can easily dismiss and ignore” (138).

- **For-profits deliver less than they could.** As previously noted, two masters cannot be served equally well, and FPCUs have consistently valued profits over instruction. According to Angulo, FPCUs are “fundamentally incapable of serving the challenging postsecondary student demographics they often target while also producing record profits demanded by executives and shareholders” (140).

- **For-profits have strong incentives to water down academic standards.** The only way for the FPCU business model to work is to recruit as many students who are eligible for federal financial aid as possible, regardless of their qualifications, and retain them until their financial aid award is exhausted. In fact, federal investigations revealed cases in which for-profit operators and administrators reversed faculty decisions or exerted pressure to “reduce content and course requirements below minimum standards practices at nonprofits” (140).

- **For-profits resist transparency and too often fail to operate within the law.** Despite increased legislative pressure and high-profile cases, “for-profits have often worked aggressively against attempts to gather information on their practices and to rein in criminal behavior within the industry” (144). Again, in an industry worth billions of dollars, penalties and fines in the millions of dollars are simply the cost of doing business.

Angulo closes with a call to action to end all public subsidies to FPCUs by eliminating references to proprietary schools in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. According to the author, regulations have been ineffective in curbing the abuses of FPCUs, and for-profit lobbying efforts have only grown more sophisticated in minimizing the effects of previous legislation. Angulo suggests, “If FPCUs are worth keeping around, free-market principles would suggest they should be able to find a niche in the free rather than [the] subsidized marketplace” (147).

*Diploma Mills* is one of the most insightful, engaging, and troubling accounts of the for-profit education industry in the United States. From a historical perspective, Angulo persuasively demonstrates the ways in which FPCUs have systemically engaged in unethical and illegal behaviors. Scandals involving greed, corruption, and deception are not new to FPCUs. Rather, they appear to be a longstanding tradition in an industry that has thoroughly fleeced the U.S. government and taxpayers of billions of dollars. *Diploma Mills* is an intelligently written and compelling read; it should have broad appeal to and invoke the ire of a broad audience of readers.
This book review provides insight about what appears to be the only college planning book for gifted and talented students. This review covers the fourth edition, published in 2014. In its 225 pages, it covers a wide-range of topics among five chapters. It offers two glossaries of terms, along with appendices that cover early entrance college programs and college planning web resources. The book specifically states it is for students and parents.

Chapter 1: College Planning

This chapter introduces the complexity of the college enrollment process. It discusses college costs and offers opinions about the higher education landscape, citing statistics and recent reports. Berger also offers some professional advice, such as, “there is no such thing as a perfect school” (6). In chapter one, the author also describes college selectivity. I was pleased to see the Berger noted that Ivy League acceptance rates are exceptions to the norm. Berger also importantly discusses the need for student self-awareness when approaching the college planning process. This chapter also provides a short section offering fifteen suggestions specifically for parents. I appreciated Berger’s advice to parents to be a “guide on the side” not the “sage on the stage” (9). In addition, this statement to the parents was a gem: “The college planning process is a part of a life development process in which there are no right answers” (10). The second half of this chapter was devoted to a five-year college planning timeline that begins with eighth grade. The checklist is thorough and specific, but written in a casual, informal tone. Berger appropriately referenced both the Common Application and the Universal Application forms. However, Berger does criticize the Common Application for their unreliable technology. I valued Berger’s comment about the importance of maintaining strong grades in the senior year. From a gifted perspective, it states that gifted students should begin planning for college in seventh grade (5). Content specific to gifted students references Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), talent search programs, competitive summer programs, high school dual enrollment and taking the PSAT/NMSQT test and SAT Subject Tests.

Chapter 2: Planning for Gifted Students

This chapter opens up with five short synopses of gifted student scenarios. Throughout this chapter, four additional students are highlighted. A very short section discusses the dilemmas faced by multipotential gifted students. The section on sensitivity to expectations could have provided more depth and suggestions as I believed managing expectations on college and career weigh heavy on gifted and talented students. Ten pages of this chapter are dedicated to gifted students with disabilities. In this section on the “twice-exceptional” (or 2E) student, Berger discusses the importance of the transition from parent advocacy to student self-advocacy. Her advice to students and families is during the college search to differentiate between colleges that just accept students with learning disabilities versus those that cater to them with specialized programming. She recommends meeting with a learning disabilities office during a campus visit if it exists. Berger provides a helpful list of sixteen suggested questions for the learning disabilities office. Another subpopulation that Berger discusses in this chapter is for homeschooled students. I found this interesting that she only highlighted Harvard’s college offerings for homeschool students versus sharing several example from multiple schools. Prior to reading this book, I had never seen the recommendation for parents of homeschooled students to keep a journal to record the academic experience. The final section of Chapter Two focuses on underachieving students. A list of thirteen potential characteristics associated with underachievement are provided by the author. Berger spends a few pages discussing the underachieving gifted student, specifically describing four options for helping the underachieving gifted student with college planning. This chapter concludes with nearly 20 suggestions for parents on working with that population.
Chapter 3: The College Search

Chapter Three is comprised of seven sections. The first section, Knowing Oneself, includes a 25-item inventory for students to assess their reasons for going to college. The reference to scoring “extra points” in the admissions review for a full summer of activities made it seem like you earn points to gain admission. In a holistic admissions review, there typically are not points so this inventory would not necessarily fully represent the holistic admissions approach. The second section introduces seven different enrichment and summer opportunities. I took offense to the comment that a gifted child who does not participate in a gifted program will have few true peers. That is a bold assumption as that will vary from student to student. The enrichment opportunities that Berger highlights include above grade-level testing, regional talent searches/cooperative programs, governor’s school programs, mentor relationships, community service/volunteer activities, and travel. As the author states, chapter three is really intended for the parent audience. The third section, Advanced Academics, is completely appropriate for gifted students. It discusses Advanced Placement, Honors courses, and International Baccalaureate. The overview about Advanced Placement was very comprehensive. The fourth section, entitled Early Entrance to College, presents the pros and cons of taking college courses before high school graduation. The next section, called Developing a Plan, is direct in stating that every gifted student should have a four-year academic plan by the end of eighth grade. Berger then presents information on study skills, time management, and decision making skills, inclusive of a practical time management chart. The section on “Your Child’s Guidance Counselor” affirms the important role that guidance counselor plays and debunks the notion that gifted students can “make it on their own” (82). Berger encourages parents to meet with the counselor and for the student to meet annually with a counselor, despite the overwhelming loads of school counselors, which Berger acknowledges. This chapter ends with content on career exploration. Showcased in this final section are three recommended career exploration instruments, appropriate for gifted students. It was interesting that this section included content for “What Teachers Can Do,” when they did not seem a primary target audience for this publication.

Chapter 4: Learning About Colleges

This chapter is centered around the seven steps of the college planning process: 1) gathering information, 2) planning and choosing, 3) making two visits, 4) applying, 5) interviewing and writing an essay, 6) applying for financial aid, and 7) making acceptance decisions. Here Berger devotes too much information to college guidebooks and CDs. Today’s students are watching videos on YouTube and using apps on their smartphones. Furthermore, the sample written request for written information from colleges has been replaced by online request forms. However, her advice on what content to view and read on college websites was spot on. I also appreciated her recommendation to students about organizing the barrage of mail they will receive once they are on colleges’ mailing lists. Berger also reminds readers that there are about 100 selective schools in the United States, representing about 3% of all colleges and universities—meaning that most students have plenty of options. Missing from this chapter is how to effectively use social media to conduct a college search. Also in this chapter, the author shares how colleges evaluate applicants. However, not all schools use extracurricular activities as an admission criteria, yet the book presents it as something every school does. Berger cleverly describes the campus tour as “A visit offers an opportunity to look beneath the ivy and examine the bricks” (115). She presents a two-stage approach to campus visits: Stage 1 is to collect general information and Stage 2 is to help students reach final decisions. I thought her recommendation of visiting eight to twelve colleges at Stage 1 was a lot, especially since that is time consuming. I appreciated her suggestion to write a thank you note to any personal interview that took place. Berger’s guidelines and advice for the Stage 2 visits are helpful and relevant. More than ten pages in this chapter contain a list of suggested questions to ask during a campus tour/visit. And, of course, no planning for college book is complete without a section devoted to athletics. In this chapter, information for student athletes is provided. The list of ten questions for coaches would be helpful for all student athletes interested in playing sports in college. This chapter did not offer any guidance specifically for gifted students. But Berger did introduce the admission options of early decision, early
action, and single-choice early action, all of which will be relevant for gifted students.

Chapter 5: The Application Process

The final chapter of this book covers nine topics ranging from the admissions application to college costs. While Berger discusses college admission prep events, it really only focuses on one organization’s offerings, when others are also available. The author describes the admissions evaluation in detail in this chapter, noting the importance of the academic factors, along with test scores, extracurricular activities, and community service. I was surprised this chapter did not discuss the holistic admissions review process. Berger provides some sage advice about thoroughly documenting extracurricular involvement from the start. For students in the arts, Berger recommends a performance resume. Next Berger discusses recommendation letters. A list of 20 questions to answer before a student meets with his/her school counselor was provided in this chapter as a tool for students. In helping students navigate college interviews, Berger offers seven suggestions, including the all-important writing a thank you note afterward. However, Berger failed to mention on-site admissions as quasi-interviews that are now taking place in the college admissions process. As Berger observes insight about the college application essay, I valued this statement: “Questions reflect the college; responses reflect the student” (169). Regarding the essay, she offers five sample prompts and eleven guidelines for authoring an outstanding essay. That section concludes with three responses to three essay questions. One of the best tips from this chapter was her statement about not double-depositing because it is unethical. That was welcomed. Berger devotes several pages to waitlists, which can be helpful to students who are waitlisted. The final part of this chapter focuses on college costs. I would have chosen a subheading of “Current Realities” where Berger labeled it as “Bad News.” It leaves judgment about that content to the reader. In addition, her subheading, “Getting Your Fair Share” is not representative as there is nothing “fair” about financial aid. Also, the challenge of including samples of college costs is that they change annually. Berger does a solid job at explaining the expected family contribution, including the addressing of multistudent families and divorced/separated parents. In this section, Berger references that “next to buying a home and paying for retirement, the cost of sending children to college is the largest financial challenge most parents face” (190). She then offers five ways to save money for college, referencing another source. Her concluding advice is: “paying college costs requires research, study and analysis” (191), and she’s correct.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, Berger references nearly 75 external resources, providing her credibility and references to her readers. This text is on par with other similar guidebooks out there. The content specifically for gifted students was light, which was disappointing. However, I also recognize that there are only slight variations in the college planning process for gifted and talented students. I was not keen on Berger’s statement that high school is free. That does not account for families who send their children to a private school. Furthermore, the short section on massive open online courses (MOOCs) seemed out of place. It was like it was thrown in to show relevancy in the revised edition.

Some of the content was outdated. For example, one piece of advice was to “make photocopies of all applications.” In today’s world of online admissions applications, there are no photocopies to make. Instead, saving PDFs is the alternative to making copies. Another example was recommending college reference books. Most of that content is now online and today’s digital-savvy student is likely to prefer that. Another example of an outdated approach was e-mailing colleges to request application forms (this was referenced twice). Today, students typically only apply online and very rarely print application forms anymore. And unfortunately, because of recent changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), that information is outdated. Another example was a reference to using videotapes in your counselor’s office in chapter four. Also in chapter four, she indicates students should pick up an admissions application during the campus tour. In chapter five, Berger recommends creating a hard-copy folder of materials when today’s student would likely prefer a digital folder on a laptop. The application organizer chart provided and the suggestion of using Microsoft Excel are helpful to students. Also in chapter five, one of the scenarios references a pile of application folders. Today, admissions staff review digital admission files, not hard copy. Again in chapter five, Berger
references providing recommendation letter writers with stamped envelopes for their letters. Most recommendation letters are now uploaded on websites or sent as PDFs via e-mail. The next edition of this book should address this outdated material.

This book is thorough and would help guide students and parents through all of the stages of the college planning, application and enrollment processes. It is comprehensive as it covers all aspects of those stages.

References


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